

Connected North East

Our blueprint

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Foreword



The North East Strategic Economic Plan is focused on unlocking the potential of our people and places to increase productivity and create more and better jobs. While Covid-19 will leave its scars, it has also provided an unparalleled opportunity to review and reimagine the connectivity of our region.

This blueprint sets out exciting plans of how, by working in partnership, we can achieve a connected North East underpinned by a transport plan and digital strategy that opens access to opportunities and places, creates global competitive advantage, leads the decarbonisation agenda and plays to our sector strengths. Reading this, I hope you feel as optimistic for the future as I do.

Lucy Winskell OBE
Chair of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership



On behalf of the North East Joint Transport Committee I am delighted to endorse this blueprint to build a connected North East.

Covid-19 has been a cause for reflection and also a call to action. We need solutions to live with, recover and renew from the pandemic, while restoring faith in our sustainable transport network. This blueprint sets out our ambitious, yet achievable connectivity vision for the North East.

Our region, made up of two combined authorities and coupled by our common LEP and transport governance, not only has the passion to drive forward this change, we have the existing assets to provide a strong foundation upon which we can build.

We hope that government shares our ambition for our region; and will partner with us for our future success.

Cllr Martin Gannon
Leader of Gateshead Council and Chair of the North East Joint Transport Committee



We've been here before in the North East. We lost our shipyards, our steelworks, our coal mines, and our wagon works. We've seen the deep scarring that unemployment has on a region's future. Well, not this time. Democratically elected leaders, along with the custodians of our business and educational institutions, have come together and developed a plan.

A Connected North East will build on our track record of delivery. We'll connect our communities to opportunities. Connect our talented workforce to the new growth industries. Connect our businesses to the rest of the world and become a driver of UK prosperity.

The North East is famous for its bridges. There is no better symbol of connectivity. This plan is the bridge from the Covid damage of today to a prosperous, low-carbon tomorrow.

We're ready. If central government gives us a green light, we'll deliver a green future.

Mayor Jamie Driscoll
Mayor of the North of Tyne Combined Authority

Now is the time to build a connected North East

This blueprint sets out how a connected North East can increase the prosperity, quality of life and health of the region. Our goal is to create and sustain 100,000 more and better jobs in a growing and decarbonised economy, where social and health inequalities are greatly reduced. Better infrastructure is fundamental to achieving this.

This blueprint unites the potential of transport and digital together and by doing so, we are building a connected North East.

Covid-19 presents challenges and opportunities to our region. 30% of our workforce has been furloughed and 7.5% of the population is now claiming Universal Credit, an increase of 55% and the highest in the UK. Despite this our resilience has shone through with businesses pivoting their offer by moving services online.

We have been introduced to new ways of doing things and in a post-Covid-19 economy we need to be able to make viable choices between the digital and physical commute.

As we bounce back from the challenges, and embrace the opportunities, we have developed a pipeline of connectivity schemes that can be rapidly delivered, accelerated, or developed, so we can build a connected North East.

All schemes are mapped into work programmes following four principles to renew and recover our region →

Healthy and vibrant places

Our towns, cities and villages will find new futures hosting exciting events and diversified businesses, underpinned by digital backbones, reallocated road space and smart, public transport.

Connect communities to opportunities

Reinvigorated and new housing link to jobs, education, healthcare and leisure through infrastructure corridors of superbus, metro, rail and cycle and walking routes, which extend our digital reach.

Provide infrastructure to bring businesses here

Welcoming new and 'northshored' businesses and government organisations to our region with high quality transport, digital and free port infrastructure, as well as fast and reliable national and international links.

Enhance North East business advantage

Infrastructure, which is a 'shop window' for North East business, displaying our clean growth, knowledge, manufacturing and digital talents.

Our re-imagining of connectivity powers our region's mission to live through Covid-19; and rapidly recover and renew during and afterwards, providing more opportunities for employment and higher value jobs.

The Connected North East programme

We call on government to support us by investing £1 billion over the next five years in the Connected North East programme:

- £100 million invested in transport projects each year
- £100 million invested in supporting digital connectivity each year

And

- Devolve further powers to provide for integrated management of our transport network
- Sustain revenue funding to support public transport services
- Invest and upgrade our national infrastructure assets for our region, including the East Coast Main Line and major roads schemes.

We are giving businesses back their viability and our workforce back their employability – a connected North East is the unifying solution

The leaders of the seven North East local authorities and the mayor of the North of Tyne Combined Authority are wholly supportive and have given their backing to this blueprint to build a Connected North East:



Cllr Simon Henig

Leader of Durham County Council



Cllr Nick Forbes

Leader of Newcastle City Council



Cllr Glen Sanderson

Acting Leader of Northumberland County Council



Cllr Graeme Miller

Leader of Sunderland City Council



Cllr Martin Gannon

Leader of Gateshead Council



Mayor Norma Redfearn

Elected Mayor of North Tyneside Council



Cllr Iain Malcolm

Leader of South Tyneside council



Mayor Jamie Driscoll

Mayor of the North of Tyne Combined Authority

Introduction

This is a once in a generation opportunity to build a connected North East

Welcome to the North East, we are a region with ambition

Our goal is to create and sustain 100,000 more and better jobs in a growing and decarbonised economy, where social and health inequalities in our distinctive and unique region are greatly reduced.

2020 – challenges and opportunities

The region has reached a crossroads – the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the demand, ambition and delivery of both digital transformation and mobility, and has presented our region with significant opportunities as well as considerable challenges.

We have an opportunity to realise new ways of living and working. In a post-Covid-19 economy we need to be able to make viable choices between the digital and physical commute.

What are we going to do? – We are building a connected North East

This blueprint sets out how a connected North East can increase the prosperity, quality of life and health of the region. In doing so we will address inequalities, improve livelihoods and create a greener more sustainable region.

We are combining both transport and digital infrastructure. Hand in hand, transport and digital technology enable the growth and productivity of a green, healthy, dynamic and thriving region.

We want to accelerate and transform digital and transport connectivity across the regional economy, enhancing productivity and the quality of public and private services, and create

new opportunities for our businesses across all sectors.

Enhanced infrastructure is fundamental to unlocking economic impact and social mobility across the entire region. By creating step changes in our transport network, alongside leveraging the significant assets and potential of our regional digital economy, we are not only embedding resilience, we are positioning the region to thrive beyond Covid-19.

Providing connectivity to all – leaving no one and nowhere behind – is our ambition.

We are building a connected North East.

How does improved connectivity allow us to live the way we do?

Connectivity is what links us. It is the digital or physical infrastructure that enables access, connecting us to the services we all rely upon for our everyday lives. Within our region, it's important that our population of two million residents can reach work, education and healthcare either online or in person.

We need it to reach beyond our region too by ensuring international connectivity through our ports and airport. Moving millions of people and tonnes of freight are critical to the success of the North East.

To us, excellent connectivity is the ability to reach others easily and reliably wherever they are in the region, country or world; whether in person or online. It means we have the connections to move freight and data, and allow people to choose whether they commute physically or digitally, or a combination of both.

To achieve our ambitions we need to:

Deliver
100,000
more and better jobs

Covid-19 has caused a setback but we are determined not to lose sight of our wider job creation ambitions.

This means continuing with our long term goal to provide more opportunities for employment and higher value jobs – shaping a new and more sustainable North East economy.



Decarbonise

All of our local authorities have declared climate emergencies, supporting the drive for decarbonisation and to address air quality challenges in the region.

This means reducing carbon emissions bringing about improvements in air quality across the region with a focus on areas that are in exceedance of target levels. This will be achieved by decarbonising the ways we work, live and travel with supporting a shift to a more sustainable and healthier way of life in the North East for our residents and visitors.



Tackle health inequalities

The North East has the lowest life expectancy of all the English regions.

This means improving health and wellbeing outcomes for local people, enabling the North East to attain health levels at least equal to other regions in the UK. This also will help to ease pressure and cost on our NHS.



Unlock access to opportunities

Covid-19 has seen some of the region's long-standing social inequalities return. These inhibit access to future opportunities and reinforce deprivation and inequality.

This means delivering access to opportunities, enabling people in all parts of our region to have a fair chance to access opportunities for employment, skills, and higher value jobs, which would increase our region's productivity. This will help to move people off Universal Credit and into gainful employment, education and training.

This plan is good for the whole country

Helping us deliver a connected North East will enable a more productive and resilient economy with a skilled workforce generating increased tax returns, a more active and agile population reducing the burden on the NHS, significant strides to decarbonise the region's lifestyles, and superb research and development capabilities driving forward the ability to build a greater future for the region and UK.

Uniting the potential of transport and digital

We have developed four work programmes for this blueprint to enable us to renew and recover our region.

Their development and strategic direction has been drawn from our existing regional Digital Strategy and our upcoming North East Transport Plan, demonstrating that we have the foundations and credibility to deliver a pan-region connectivity programme. This approach has ensured we are well placed to build on our existing strategies and plans, with a shared vision of what a Connected North East could and should be.

North East Digital Strategy

The North East LEP's Digital for Growth strategy focusses on developing a pipeline of activity that aligns to the national digital agenda by building on our existing digital assets and capabilities. The strategy identifies four priority themes:



Data

Harnessing the power of data and analytics, revolutionised by the onset of 5G, AI and machine learning. Reimagining the future of regions, cities and communities providing routes to data-led growth.



Digital collaboration and enterprise

Accelerating our thriving tech sector and driving innovation to grow technology-enabled businesses and create new products, services and solutions.



Infrastructure and connectivity

Deploying next generation digital infrastructure to connect people and places through fibre, ultra-fast Wi-Fi and 5G – providing ubiquitous connectivity to homes, businesses and open spaces leaving no one and nowhere behind.



Workforce

Building an inclusive and resilient labour market by improving digital literacy and access to technology – increasing employability and making careers in digital attractive and possible for all.

North East Transport Plan

The first North East statutory transport plan is currently in development. It will set out our priorities and form the basis for bids and requests for funding for transport investment in our region up to 2035. The objectives have been approved by the North East Joint Transport Committee:



Carbon-neutral transport

Help tackle the climate emergency declared by our two Combined and seven local authorities in the North East.



Overcome inequality and grow our economy

Aligned with the North East LEP's long term goal to return the region to pre-Covid-19 GDP and employment levels, moving forward in pursuit of our economic ambitions set out in the region's Strategic Economic Plan.



Healthier North East

Seek to improve people's health by increasing the levels of active travel and reducing carbon emissions, thereby improving air quality.



Appealing sustainable transport choices

Introduce measures that make sustainable travel, including cycling and walking, an attractive, green alternative to getting around.



Safe, secure network

Strive to ensure people feel safe and secure when travelling around the North East.

Work programmes to build a connected North East



Healthy and vibrant places

Schemes that are cultural-led, sustainable access to a network of places across the region, underpinned by digital solutions for effective operations.



Connect communities to opportunities

Schemes that drive up the accessibility, speed and reliability of our connectivity network for all, achieving equity through both digital and physical means.



Provide infrastructure to bring businesses here

Schemes that target investment to enable businesses to thrive with support for a digitally enabled economy.



Enhance North East business advantage

Schemes that capitalise on our sectoral strengths across the region to tackle climate action, showcase our innovation culture and solve challenges through technology.

North East England – our region

Our region is a made up of a diverse mix of urban and rural communities and home to almost two million people. Our three vibrant city centres of Durham, Newcastle and Sunderland are surrounded by lively towns and villages, long stretches of unspoilt coastline, and some of the most beautiful and least populated countryside in the UK. Our region contains two UNESCO World Heritage Sites, a National Park, and countless historically significant industrial locations including Beamish – the Living Museum of the North.

The North East has a workday population of just under one million people, resulting in our regional economy generating £40.1 billion GVA in 2019.

The region's academic sector includes four major universities: Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria and Sunderland, plus assets such as the National Innovation Centre for Ageing. We have considerable economic strengths including high value advanced manufacturing, with clusters in several sectors including automotive and pharmaceutical, renewable and offshore energy production. We have plans to build on our manufacturing strengths with the development of the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP) being led by Sunderland and South Tyneside Councils near Nissan's car plant close to the A19.

We are known as leaders in innovation assets, digital and knowledge-based services, culture and creative industries.

Our proud history of industrial innovation, flexibility and resilience makes our region what it is.

We have some of the best coastlines and coastal resorts with recent and ongoing regeneration projects such as South Shields 365, which has delivered a new transport interchange for the town and home to The Word – the National Centre for the Written Word.

Our vibrant digital community is one of the most productive and fastest developing in the UK, across industry and public services.

A combination of start-up, high growth

and established businesses sit alongside. For example, we have PROTO, an emerging technology centre, located in Gateshead that's home to some of the region's most innovative businesses. In Sunderland, we have the Digital Catapult centre providing localised and tailored services to drive digital adoption across the North East. As well as this, our schools, colleges and universities are leading the development and uptake of digital skills.

We have a well established integrated public and sustainable transport system with potential to improve this further to expand its reach and capability. Our existing network contributes a significant amount to the region's economy and ease of connectivity by providing access to jobs, workforces and customers, and allowing socially important connections to be maintained for visiting relatives and friends, and accessing leisure and shopping destinations, as well as helping to tackle the region's environmental and congestion problems.

People in our area use buses more than in any other comparable region and they are a key element of our transport system.

Last year there were over 162 million bus journeys made in our region. There are high levels of satisfaction with bus services and our bus operators continue to renew or retrofit their fleet with greater levels of technology and reduced emissions. The bus industry employs several thousand people in the North East. Cooperation between our local and combined authorities and bus operators has been constructive and positive throughout the pandemic. Along with the establishment of NEbus – the bus operators' association – this close cooperation can be built upon to help all partners transform and develop the region's transport network post Covid-19.

Tyne and Wear Metro and Local Rail also play a critical role as an economic enabler. Research shows that together they contribute up to £224m of Gross Value Added (GVA) to our regional economy each year and that every new journey on the network brings a £8.50 direct benefit to the economy. Metro also plays an important role in multi-modal journeys. Metro, bus and taxi interchanges enable integrated

journeys to be made, with through-ticketing products available, as well as many stations having park and ride options. A £362m new Metro fleet is planned, with the new trains due to be fully phased on the network by 2024.

We have well-developed plans to take devolved responsibility for local rail services, built on integration with the Metro.

We also have a growing and improving cycling network. The Shields Ferry is a key link in our sustainable travel network, providing a vital cross-Tyne river service for walkers and cyclists. Coaches are an essential part of our tourist offer and also play a major part in school transport and educational activities.

We have strong national and international connectivity too. In the near future, the North Atlantic Optical Fibre Loop cable will link Stellium Datacenters – based in North Tyneside and the largest purpose-built datacentre campus in the UK – to mainland Europe, giving the region faster and more reliable digital connectivity and interconnecting national and international networks. Our region sits strategically on the East Coast Main Line which connects us to the capitals of England and Scotland as well as the other main cities in the North and Midlands. We have five seaports which handle millions of tonnes of cargo, with Port of Tyne also handling hundreds of thousands of passengers, with strong road and rail connectivity. Newcastle International Airport is our global gateway connecting our region to the world and is the second largest airport in Northern England serving over five million passengers.

But above all, our people make our region unique. The North East is made up of positive and well-skilled people who want to contribute to moving our country forward.

Yes, our region is vulnerable to economic shocks, more so than in other parts of the UK, but with our strong existing assets and resilient people, we firmly believe we have the potential to deliver the greatest integrated sustainable transport and digital network in the world. To achieve this, our region requires further investment to deliver its economic recovery and growth.



Connected North East – responding to Covid-19

The stories from our region, combined with the facts and figures that we have collected, set us some important challenges. We must acknowledge and address them so that we can move forward from Covid-19, building back a better connected North East.

Key insights

- Our regional resilience has shone through with innovators and entrepreneurs inspired by the opportunity to change the way we do things and deliver a more connected region. History has taught us that although we can be vulnerable to economic shocks, we have the skills, ingenuity and drive to stimulate a fast recovery and remain resilient;
- High levels of furlough and universal credit claims are evidence that our workforce and young people will be seeking opportunities. It is our role as a region to help create these for the communities we serve by using targeted investment to enable a vibrant future;
- Covid-19 has increased physical activity for some in our region; but although health inequalities remain, we can address many of these physical access issues and encourage a healthier relationship with connectivity;
- Inequality for many, especially digital inequality is evident, with many unable to move online when physical alternatives became unavailable when lockdown began and physical travel was not permitted. With concerted cross-sectoral action we can address this;
- Globally, the economy is adapting to Covid-19; and lifestyles are changing too. This is a major opportunity for our region which offers a great standard of living and can support the North Shoring of people and business; and
- We need to regain ground and are confident that with enabling investment we can get back on track to creating 100,000 more and better jobs.

Our call to action:

Our programme is ambitious but is deliverable and we anticipate that with collective action, with regional and national investments the following can be delivered. Schemes are detailed on pages 11-13.

2020

In the immediate short term:

- We will continue to make the case to government and its agencies including Highways England and Network Rail to continue to invest in planned programmes of work to connect the region, physically and digitally;
- We will ensure that vital services are in place to keep people mobile and connected to economic, training opportunities and healthcare;
- We will press for rapid intervention from government on shovel-ready infrastructure schemes to facilitate our recovery;
- To follow on from recent funding, government will need to accelerate major scheme development for our longer-term recovery;
- We will deliver infrastructure that unlocks our growth sites and the means in which to transition to a digitally powered economy;
- We will make significant strides towards enhancing digital connectivity across the region and skills programmes in place to facilitate access and achieve inclusivity;
- We will ensure our places will benefit from consistently high quality public Wi-Fi.

2025

In the medium term:

- We will deliver an exemplar walking and cycling network that is of consistent high quality and will start to be forged right across the region;
- We will consolidate the environmental and activity habits of the region to secure better health and air quality;
- We will ensure that the skills, health and opportunity benefits of retained and improved connectivity will shine through;
- We will highlight the competitive advantage of all forms of public transport and active travel with high quality assets;
- We will deliver a data driven region and economy;
- We will harness the power of sensor technology and broadband connectivity to manage our assets remotely;
- We will unlock the potential of our ports and airports in a greener way;
- We will utilise digital technology to reframe our relationship with transport, including information, payment and ticketing mechanisms;
- We will make significant strides towards a decarbonised public transport network;
- We will accelerate 5G connectivity around the region with programmes to maximise its impact;
- We will deliver a transformed network of places with high quality cultural-led regeneration interventions framed around active travel, public transport and digital means from which they can thrive.

2030

And for our longer term ambitions

- We will continue our successful delivery of larger packages underway through a rolling development and delivery fund;
- We will provide our businesses with the clean infrastructure they need to grow; and make the conditions to enable more to come to join us. We will celebrate their success;
- We will have the capability and capacity to manage our assets remotely across the region and harness the power of technology;
- We will reap the benefits of equitable national and international connectivity to others;
- We will use our region's assets to our advantage in leading to a low carbon future with alternative fuels researched and deployed here together with renewable energy forming a significant part in how we power our network;
- We will deliver an exemplary skills programme and innovation led exercise to frame the workforce and solutions of tomorrow;
- We will test and deploy these solutions building on the base connectivity delivered in the earlier stages of the programme.

The impact of Covid-19 on our region

Many of the long-standing social and economic challenges and inequalities that the region has always been vulnerable to have re-emerged.

Despite this, the region and its people have shown resilience and ingenuity, just as we have always done. As we navigate the challenges and changes that Covid-19 presents, we have an opportunity to realise new ways of living and working.

The region has changed

2020 brought a reduction in personal mobility never seen before and changed behaviours, emphasising the need for better connectivity whether digital or physical.

Environment

The lockdown gave us cleaner and quieter towns, cities and neighbourhoods. The North East is now in a strong position. We will work to sustain some of the benefits this has afforded us.

Working from home

We estimate 27% of the region's workforce are now working from home, slightly behind the UK figure of 32%.

However, the underlying pre-Covid-19 data highlights that we had the smallest percentage of regular homeworkers, with just under 4% of people in our region working solely from home in 2018.

Post Covid-19 rates of working from home will fall back but certainly not to where they were.

Workforce

Our region has a diverse workforce. On the one hand we have a high proportion of public sector employees and financial and professional services. These are largely desk-based jobs readily adaptable to remote working, if the requisite infrastructure is in place.

On the other hand, the region has a high proportion of manual roles in, for example, manufacturing, tourism and construction – sectors with place-based roles not deliverable via remote working. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that 30% of the workforce was furloughed during the lockdown period.

These challenges have been intensified by the impact of Covid-19. The pandemic has accelerated the demand, ambition and delivery of both digital transformation and mobility, presenting significant opportunities as well as considerable challenges.

Businesses are also looking to pivot through the use of digital adoption towards moving their offer, service or products online.

Whilst our region has adjusted well, we are vulnerable to the effects of Covid-19. Despite this the region has significant untapped potential which we can build on through enhanced connectivity.

High streets

North East retail footfall has been in decline since 2015 and Covid-19 has impacted this further with a decline of 66% in June 2020 compared to last year. One of the key reasons for visiting the high street less is shop closures; as shops close, fewer people visit the high street making it less economically viable for remaining shops to trade. The recovery from Covid-19 must address this from the start.

Key insight

The region must meet these opportunities and challenges head-on so that we are not just surviving the global pandemic, but enabling an ambitious and productive region for the future.

The unifying solution to these challenges is connectivity.



Over a quarter of a million people furloughed in the North East LEP area
30% of the workforce (251,200)



67,000 more people on Universal Credit in the North East LEP area
a 55% rise since March



Regional retail footfall
June 2020 – down 66% compared to June 2019
July 2020 – down 53% compared to July 2019



Regular reporting of **poor internet connectivity** in parts of the region – a persistent problem for North East people and businesses



27% of the local workforce are working from home
Behind the UK figure of 32%



It took until **2016** for North East employment to return to **2008** levels following the last recession – the speed of this recovery must be faster



Transport emissions per capita = 1.7 (tonnes CO2)
– the best performing region outside of London



92% of days showing as 'low emissions' on the Air Quality Index in the North East in 2019



I was furloughed by my employer so I have been at home the whole time. I use the internet for streaming TV and almost every day I can tell when people are logging on to work as my broadband can't keep up with the demand. If more people are going to work from home I hope the broadband speeds and stability can be improved.

Alex – Hebburn, Pilot



From the beginning of March (the start of lockdown), all of my lectures/seminars were cancelled so I had work from home for my assignments. This has affected my social life as I've missed my friends and really look forward to everything returning back to normal. Although my classes were cancelled, I was able to communicate with my tutor via email and Google Hangouts.

Alicia – South Shields, 3rd year student



The cost to pay for the extra devices so my kids can home-school at the same time has been rather challenging, we frequently lose our broadband connection, and I don't have the digital skills to support them when there is a technical problem. I can't wait for them to all go back to school but I worry about how they will get there safely.

Selina – Crawcrook, Gateshead, Mum of three kids



The strain put on rural patient transport services would have been greatly eased with greater access to regular and coordinated links to town, city and county hospitals.

Dr Angus Aitken – Allendale, Northumberland, GP



We are very aware that many individuals from our communities are feeling especially isolated at this time due to digital exclusion as they are not able to access online support and activities. This is due to not being able to afford broadband and electronic devices, safeguarding issues, lack of privacy in extended family households, or not having the necessary digital skills. This is especially true for older people, and those who have English as an alternative language.

Vikas Kumar MBE – Director of GemArts based in Gateshead



Our track record – trusted to deliver

The North East has a recent and strong reputation for successfully delivering major investment programmes on-time and on-budget.

Our strong track record in delivering major programmes includes £350m for asset renewals on the Tyne and Wear Metro system and the North East Local Enterprise Partnership's Local Growth Fund (LGF), a capital programme of £270m that forms a key element of the North East Growth Deals agreed with government between 2014 and 2017.

The LGF also included the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, a regionwide mini-programme focusing on sustainable methods of transport, including cycle ways and improved traffic management systems to enable more reliable transport links.

Recently our region received £2.26m through the first tranche of the government's Emergency Active Travel Fund to support and grow cycling and walking during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. Our local authorities were able to swiftly deliver 'pop-up' active travel infrastructure across the region.

We also have an established low carbon sector through the 'Go Ultra Low' programme, which has made progress in delivering a high-quality electric vehicle charging network for the region, including a new Electric Vehicle Filling station in Sunderland.

Earlier this year, we were awarded £198m through the Transforming Cities Fund, including £95m to unlock frequency and reliability improvements across the Tyne and Wear Metro system through dualling the remaining sections of track.

The North East has a strong and demonstrable track record in digital design, innovation and creativity. With the establishment of the North East LEP's Digital for Growth strategy, the region now has the framework in place to ensure our partners can work together to build the region's digital assets.

Our Joint Transport Committee oversees integrated transport arrangements and operations across the whole area, confirming our regional transport powers and track record of working in partnership with organisations.

Our recent track record and governance arrangements show that we can manage responsibility for the delivery of a variety of projects. In recent years the government has given us repeated votes of confidence by awarding us funding and financing, trusting us to deliver projects with effective scrutiny. This also provides us with the strong platform for additional powers. **We stand ready, willing and able.**



Electric Vehicle Filling station, Sunderland – 2019



Northern Spire Bridge, River Wear – 2018



£350m Metro Asset Renewal Plan programme – 2010-2021



North Tyneside Council opened a 4km pop-up cycleway along the coast



The region's Digital Strategy is now in place to develop and support the sector

Our plan to build a connected North East

By taking decisive action we will transform the connectivity of the region. Through targeting investment in places, people, skills, business, physical infrastructure and operations we can ensure the North East can increase the prosperity, quality of life and health of the region.

Clearly this bold and ambitious vision is only possible when we work in partnership with a multitude of agencies including central government, Transport for the North, the Northern Transport Acceleration Council and delivery partners, users and businesses. We will harness expertise to develop and deliver an effective package of connectivity schemes delivered through a clear accountable assurance framework to have maximum impact and value for money.

The region has a pipeline of developed connectivity schemes which can be rapidly delivered to enable the recovery from the impacts of the pandemic. Concurrently, we must advance a series of schemes from development to delivery to realise the ambition of reimagining connectivity giving businesses back their viability and the workforce back their employability. All schemes are mapped against our four principle work programmes:

 **Healthy and vibrant places**

 **Connect communities to opportunities**

 **Provide the infrastructure to bring businesses here**

 **Enhance North East business advantage**

Through establishing a package of proposals set against our work programmes, we can deliver a future of a connected region that has the greenest reliable connectivity network, levels up on skills and access to physical and digital connectivity, harnesses our assets to power our networks, and lays the foundations for growth and development in a smart way.

Funding the Connected North East programme

Our programme is fully costed and is delivered in a phased way as shown on pages 11-13.

The benefits can be realised by investing in:

- A series of short term projects in the next five years that have significant economic stimulus effects and maintain a reliable network, unlocking local jobs for North East people.
- A programme of schemes that requires development and delivery funding
- Local investment effects cemented by national infrastructure investments to our transport and digital assets, such as strategic rail and road
- By planning in this way, we can build connectivity that has long lasting positive impacts to the region, its people, businesses, visitors and the UK as a whole.

We call on government to support us by investing £1 billion over the next five years in the Connected North East programme:

- £100 million invested in transport projects each year
- £100 million invested in supporting digital connectivity each year

And

- Devolve further powers to provide for integrated management of our transport network
- Sustain revenue funding to support public transport services
- Invest and upgrade our national infrastructure assets for our region, including the East Coast Main Line and major roads schemes.



Shovel-ready schemes

* Entries represent packages and programmes
 ● = Government / national agency responsibility

Delivery of these schemes can commence at short notice.

Healthy and vibrant places

Cultural-led, sustainable access to a network of places across the region, underpinned by digital solutions for effective operations

-  Sustainable access improvements through fast, safe and simple bus, walking and bike connections to our places
-  Core data platform for smart regional data to enable solutions and management tools for places
-  Smart connectivity solutions to rural locations through pilot studies
-  Upgrade of point to point mesh network to underpin machine vision applications
-  Next generation stations and interchange upgrades programme. A first phase of identified interchanges to test and trial design and technology solutions
-  Rollout of single ultrafast Wi-Fi architecture to key locations
-  Implementation of a geo-fenced air quality zone and remote management of hybrid vehicles
-  Deployment of a unified whole region sensor network to enable smart solutions

Connect communities to opportunities

Driving up the accessibility, speed and reliability of our connectivity network for all, achieving equity through both digital and physical means

-  Deployment of gigabit capable infrastructure to every home, school and workplace
-  Permanent solutions for emergency active travel measures
-  Maintaining connectivity through Covid-19 revenue support for public transport
-  A network of high quality bus measures corridors delivered across the region improving strategic connections
-  Transforming Cities plus – delivering a transformational package of active and public transport schemes
-  Enable inclusion through the distribution of connected devices and skills programmes
-  Additional strategic highways maintenance budget harnessing technology to monitor, deliver targeted improvements to keep the network operating for all
-  Comprehensive regional mapping survey of cellular connectivity and develop a digital platform to aggregate demand and identify market failure
-  Improved connectivity in remote and deprived areas, including increased digital engagement in the democratic process
-  Connected transport hubs and high quality infrastructure, including testing micro mobility solutions

Provide the infrastructure to bring business here

Targeting investment to enable businesses to thrive, with support for a digitally enabled economy

-  Creation of a shared regional barrier busting framework for planning consents, wayleaves and permits to enable greater integration of connectivity projects
-  Enabling infrastructure for our Enterprise Zone growth sites, part of a phased approach to unlocking our growth creating direct and indirect jobs embracing digital construction
-  Bus and rolling stock upgrades to improve fleet environmental performance
-  Flexible business accommodation support and short duration rental marketplace
-  Delivery of highway pinchpoints package on the major and strategic road network
-  Local rail timetable improvements to connect underserved communities

Enhance North East business advantage

Capitalising on sectoral strengths across the region to take climate action, showcase our innovation culture and solve challenges through technology

-  Acceleration programme and challenge fund to encourage 5G-led innovation and business creation to maximise impact of investment in 5G infrastructure
-  Create a digitised regional infrastructure and asset map by implementing machine vision on public sector vehicles
-  Expansion of the EV charging network in the region, part of a multi-phase approach to deliver an electric revolution and play a leading national role in the transition towards zero carbon mobility
-  Using technology to deliver contactless ticketing and information upgrades across our modes

Schemes for delivery in the next five years – requiring funding to be accelerated

* Entries represent packages and programmes
 ● = Government / national agency responsibility

These schemes are at an advanced stage of development. Accelerating development funding will move them to ‘Ready to Deliver’ status.

Healthy and vibrant places

Cultural-led, sustainable access to a network of places across the region, underpinned by digital solutions for effective operations

-  Sustainable access improvements to our places through fast and easy bus, walking and bike connections to our places
-  Rural 5G demonstrator to create business case blueprints for education, social care, health, economy, farming and transport
-  Assistive technologies for smart parking and active travel data capture with air quality monitoring
-  Cultural and tourism digital platform with customer interface
-  Civic wireless infrastructure upgrades and city management / operations centre for smart place management

Connect communities to opportunities

Driving up the accessibility, speed and reliability of our connectivity network for all, achieving equity through both digital and physical means

-  Delivery of a connected regional programme of exemplar consistent walk and cycle interventions
-  Connected transport hubs and high quality infrastructure, including micro mobility solutions
-  An innovation challenge fund for rural smart connectivity solutions working to enhance rural productivity
-  Continued transport maintenance funding and targeting decarbonisation solutions and maximising technology for asset management
-  Data sharing platform and artificial intelligence initiatives for assistive technologies for the healthcare industry
-  High speed ready as high quality gateways to the region
-  Accelerating the business cases for strategic highways and major road network schemes
-  Improved operations for enhanced connectivity
-  Funding to support colleges and training providers to enhance online learning offer
-  Funding to support FE and HE to address the challenges of blended learning, incentivising provision of the right level of digital expertise and ensuring curriculum and access to technology matches market demand
-  Use of artificial intelligence to enhance assistive technology solutions to mitigate increased demand for supported living and social isolation post Covid-19
-  Walking and cycling ambassadorial programmes and behavioural change initiatives to cement best practice
-  Creation of a regional holistic dataset and evidence base for informing digital inclusion interventions
-  Enhancements to existing and new bus-based park and ride schemes

Provide the infrastructure to bring business here

Targeting investment to enable businesses to thrive, with support for a digitally enabled economy

-  Delivery of enabling and next generation connectivity to unlock further strategic growth sites (housing and employment) including online platform to enable local trade, deliveries and international exports
-  5G capacity, and key sectoral specialist applications
-  Grants to support ecommerce and digital marketing
-  Creation of an innovation challenge fund to develop and trial smart place applications with SMEs, start-ups and social enterprises
-  Digital hub to match apprentices to opportunities, support and funding
-  Skills and training fund to upskill existing workforces and enable businesses to increase digital adoption and employment opportunities in key industries

Enhance North East business advantage

Capitalising on sectoral strengths across the region to take climate action, showcase our innovation culture and solve challenges through technology

-  Dynamic regional transport and air quality model with regional operations functionality
-  Freeflowing routes to our ports and airport through enhanced connectivity, autonomous vehicles and environmental performance initiatives enabling free and smart port status
-  Increase regional capability and capacity in data analytics to support data-led connectivity initiatives including an autonomous vehicle testbed
-  Driving forward the decarbonisation of our rail and bus fleet with asset deployment solutions

Schemes for development and delivery in the next 10 years

* Entries represent packages and programmes
 ● = Government / national agency responsibility

These ambitious schemes require development funding to bring them to an advanced stage and move to delivery.

Healthy and vibrant places

Cultural-led, sustainable access to a network of places across the region, underpinned by digital solutions for effective operations

-  Sustainable access improvements to our places through fast and easy bus, walking and bike connections to our places
-  Interchange programme of upgrades with exemplary facilities, learning and deploying solutions from initial phases
-  New railway stations, improving access to our communities
-  A long term sustainable infrastructure upgrade fund to ensure future generations' access to opportunities through physical and digital connectivity is bolstered, delivering a connected North East

Connect communities to opportunities

Driving up the accessibility, speed and reliability of our connectivity network for all, achieving equity through both digital and physical means

-  Identify and fix the connectivity gaps, including river crossings and dedicated bus only routes.
-  Expansion of micromobility with on demand trials
-  Expanded metro, rail and bus connectivity through infrastructure corridors with high quality kerbside connected assets
-  Expanded bus priority (rapid transit) programme on a series of corridors across the region
-  Shields Ferry replacement southbank landing works and enhanced connectivity
-  Restoring our railway fund schemes
-  Accelerating the business cases for strategic road network studies and major road network improvements
-  Demand Responsive Transport Trials finding regional solutions
-  Park and ride deployment (second phase)
-  Comprehensive cross modal ticketing, information and planning services
-  Micromobility hubs reacting to trials and creating long terms investments
-  Enhanced public transport frequency, including additional trains and buses
-  Devolved civic innovation funding to enable continued public sector reform through the implementation and adoption of new and emerging technologies

Provide the infrastructure to bring business here

Targeting investment to enable businesses to thrive, with support for a digitally enabled economy

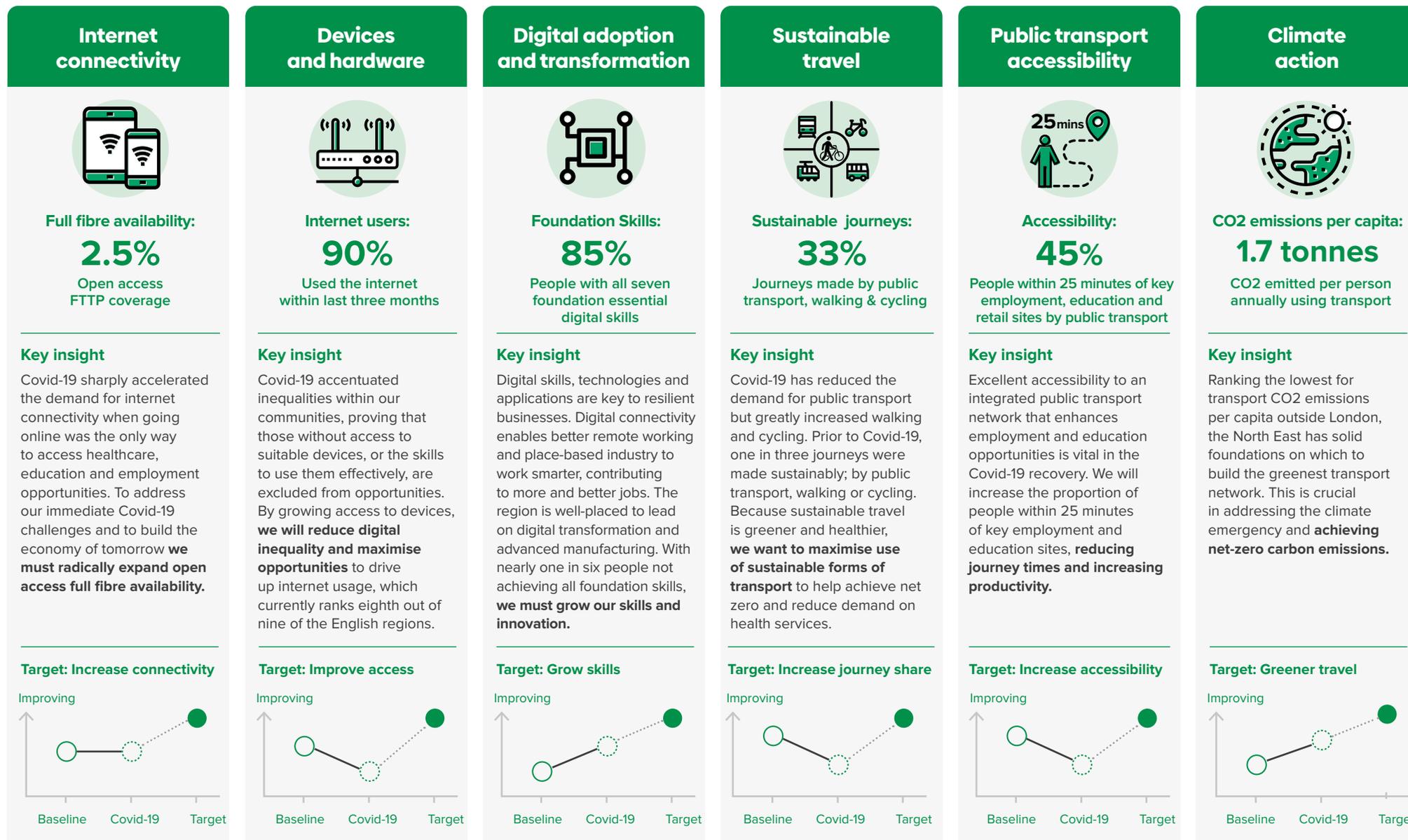
-  5G development fund for the development of individual business cases
-  Regional digital inclusion fund to ensure responsive and agile delivery of future skills provision, device distribution and digital adoption
-  Apprenticeships programme for future data scientists and engineers
-  High speed, long distance rail services calling at Newcastle International Airport
-  Delivery of enabling and next generation connectivity to unlock further strategic growth sites (housing and employment) including 5G capacity, and key sectoral specialist applications
-  East Coast Mainline upgrades to enable High Speed 2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail to connect with the region

Enhance North East business advantage

Capitalising on sectoral strengths across the region to take climate action, showcase our innovation culture and solve challenges through technology

-  Exemplar Metro energy package and switchgear upgrades
-  Finding solutions for EVs at home, expanding the reach of the charging network and taking steps to encourage fleet replacement
-  Regional infrastructure and asset map
-  Skills Centre capabilities for future data scientists and engineers
-  Localised investment fund supplementing innovation business cases with required digital infrastructure provision to ensure continued sectoral growth
-  Decarbonisation pathway and alternative fuels innovator for mobility and advanced manufacturing
-  Significant further rail and bus decarbonisation programme

Measuring success – Key Performance Indicators



The outcomes

- Enabling improved access to high quality physical and digital connectivity – and the skills and devices to utilise them
- Culture-led, place-based regeneration enabled by enhanced digital and physical connectivity
- A Connected North East that is data-driven by default
- All of our growth areas, including Enterprise Zones, connected by high quality active travel and public transport networks, increasing job opportunities
- Increased personal mobility across the region via integrated networks offering convenient ticketing, payment and information sources
- Reliable, resilient public transport offering the ability to deliver the greatest and greenest public transport network
- The greenest public transport fleet with a significant shift towards the use of electric vehicles for personal and business mobility
- Airports and ports that offer sustainable surface connectivity driven by technology to expand the international reach of the region
- A smart region with the infrastructure, data and technological capability to manage assets and make decisions, creating cost savings at a local level
- Decarbonising the ways we work, live and travel
- Laying the foundations for identifying, testing and deploying future connectivity solutions
- Increased capacity on national connections including ECML and HS2 to boost the attractiveness of the North East as a viable business location
- Expansion of our exemplar connectivity assets to support innovation-led growth and digital transformation
- Increased digitalisation capacity of R&D sites to open up inward investment opportunities and global competitiveness
- A fully enabled workforce with the skills to increase productivity, digital adoption and employability

The benefits we'll achieve:

Productivity

Our aim is that employees and businesses can become more productive wherever they are in the region.

Effects include more reliable and available internet connectivity, reducing journey time on our public transport network, and expanding its reach to benefit communities connecting them to opportunities.

Increased reliability on the public transport through targeted action will reduce journey times. Technology can be harnessed to allow the region to effectively manage assets remotely saving time and money and adding capacity and capability to operations. This combined package will culminate in increased worker productivity generating significant GVA benefits in the recovery and renewal phase beyond the pandemic.

Business growth & resilience

Through connecting business locations and deploying the innovative use of technology we are paving the way for significant business expansion and relocation within the region. This builds on the sectoral specialisms that exist and provides resilience in the region for onward success. Ultimately, with more successful enterprises we can generate more and better jobs, and reduce unemployment levels reacting to the effects of the pandemic. Furthermore, in harnessing much welcomed existing investment by government in innovation bodies we can unlock their true potential in researching, developing, testing and deploying connectivity solutions in the region.

By investing in places we can latch onto the cultural diversity of the region, supporting our many assets including physical jobs on the high street with domestic and inbound tourism, creating a 365 day economy.

Climate change

There is a real opportunity to deliver a decarbonised economy, connectivity system and lifestyle. Our investments look at the way people interact with the network, making public and active travel a real alternative and addressing externalities.

Our ports and airports will play a significant trade role in the future of the UK as we forge relationships, however we can achieve this in a much smarter and greener way. With investment in how we get goods and people to and from these excellent assets as well as onsite operations, we can deliver a decarbonised future.

Through innovation we can look to harness our natural assets to power the region's future economy, through wind power and the development of future fuels across the region.

This will lead us towards a green and sustainable connectivity network which aligns to the emerging Decarbonisation Plan for Transport and Climate Action Plan. It will be a significant contribution to achieving net zero and tackling the climate emergency.

Health

With a more active and decarbonised lifestyle we anticipate positive effects towards improved life expectancy and including disability-free life expectancy (DFLE) and healthy life expectancy (HLE).

There will be a natural reduced demand on NHS services through a more active and healthy population, reducing overall operating costs and freeing up capacity in the service.

Reducing inequalities

The significant effects of this programme are around delivering equitable access to digital and physical connectivity, so that no matter where you are across the region, you have access to high quality digital connectivity, improved active and public transport access to a range of opportunities, reliable service provision, and the devices and skills in which to succeed.

Through taking this action we can improve access to opportunities, increase employability region-wide, and take significant steps towards **unlocking our region's potential**.

Overall effects

Collectively there will be direct benefits to government of a package-led approach to investing holistically in connectivity.

Theme	Direct benefit	Benefit to government
Employment	Greater number of employment opportunities across the region	Reduced unemployment levels region-wide and increased productivity / contribution economically
Business capability	Sectors supported to grow and develop, and forge new business relationships through digital and physical means	Increased trade and productivity
Health	Improved life expectancy, including healthy life expectancy	Reduced burden on NHS, lowering costs
Climate action	Reduced carbon outputs direct and indirect	Supporting government action in decarbonising the transport network and achieving net zero
Digital connectivity	Enhanced digital connectivity and capability regionwide	An expanded network that adds functionality and resilience nationwide
Culture	World-class cultural assets supported by improved physical and digital connectivity domestically and internationally	Domestic and international tourism attracted to the diversity of the region
Trade and export	Sustainably connected ports and airports	Increased role in import and export
Innovation	A productive sector finding solutions for connectivity	Solutions that can be tested and deployed nationally
Skills	A workforce with the skills to thrive in a connected world	Increased productivity of the UK's workforce

Connected North East – exemplar outcomes

Metro, bus and local rail expansions

Connect communities to opportunities

The expansion of our bus, metro and local rail network will be through infrastructure corridors, parallel to cycle routes and conveying our region's digital backbone, perfect for the physical or digital commute to work or education.



Reimagining our diverse spaces

Healthy and vibrant places

Our places will be the backdrop to a cultural revolution and 365 days a year economy enabled by a reallocation of road space and a digital backbone, enabling events and diversifying our tourist and retail offer. Bike, foot, or public transport will be the natural choices to reach the performance. We will be able to continue to offer world-class sporting and cultural events.



5G-enabled, connected and autonomous logistics – a globally unique centre of excellence

Enhance North East business advantage

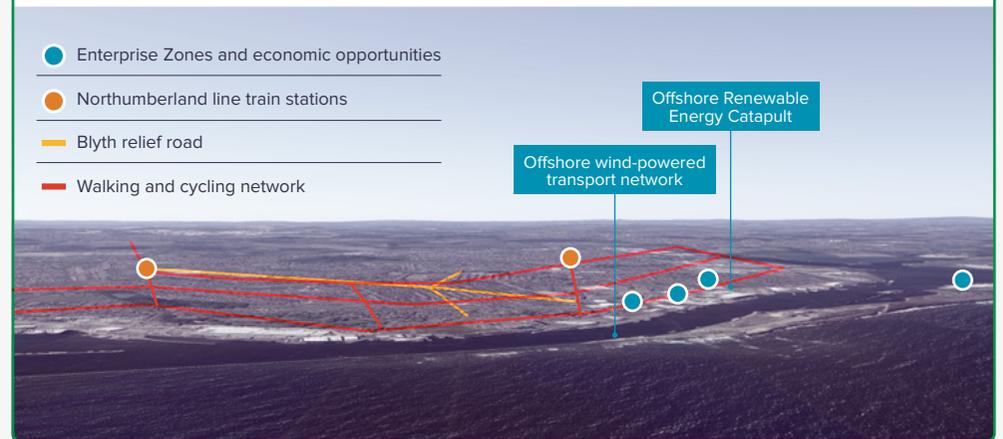
North East Combined Authority hosts a 5G-enabled logistics pilot in Sunderland featuring autonomous lorries to move goods around a site, showcasing our talents in digital and advanced manufacturing. It's a sign of things to come, we can take 5G out of the testbed and into an operational environment by delivering 5G-connected, autonomous 40-tonne trucks to distribute parts and assemblies. This drives operational efficiencies and significantly improves productivity, delivering an exportable world-class product.



Infrastructure ready for North Shoring

Provide infrastructure to bring businesses here

The North of Tyne Combined Authority is developing sites close to new rail, road and active travel routes, with fast digital capacity, powered by clean energy. We'll roll out more sites such as these across the region, ready to welcome organisations to the North East.



This plan is supported across our region

Our blueprint also has wide and unequivocal backing from business, academic, trade unions, and third sector stakeholders across the North East:

“

For the regional economy to thrive, pockets of investment need to address what our towns, villages and communities need; ensure infrastructure appeals to businesses by its green and sustainable nature; and showcase the talent within our sectors. Our goal is to create wider strategic links through targeted highway interventions and improvements to the East Coast Mainline and Regional Rail. In this way and more we will connect the North East to new opportunities both nationally and globally to become world-leading.

Lucy Winskell OBE
Chair of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership



“

Improving our region's digital offer as set out in this blueprint will allow us to seize the opportunities that have emerged from the Covid-19 crisis, including more innovative and digital ways of working. Many businesses have made clear that they want to move away from office space in city centre locations and increase remote working and working from home. Funding for gigabit-ready digital connectivity across the entire region will accelerate our economic recovery.

James Ramsbotham
Chief Executive of the North East England Chamber of Commerce



“

It has been inspiring to see the level of commitment from North East leaders to secure this £2.3bn programme which will level up the North East and create 33,000 jobs. Such investment comes at a crucial time, and will make a real difference through a blend of hard and soft infrastructure which will put this region on the front foot for inward investment. We look forward to playing our part in making it happen.

Sarah Glendinning
Regional Director at CBI



“

On behalf of the North East's voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, I warmly welcome this blueprint to build a connected North East. Addressing digital exclusion is a key priority for our sector and for the region, as people with poor or no internet access across the North East have been isolated and feeling left behind. The interventions set out in this blueprint gives our region a chance to ensure that nobody is left behind by lessening the digital divide as we begin to live with Covid-19 and begin our recovery and renewal by creating a better connected North East.

Carol Botten - Chief Executive Officer at VONNE
(Voluntary Organisations' Network North East)



“

Innovation underpins these bold plans and universities in the North East are working with our partners to bring together the expertise needed formulate and deliver the solutions required. This package of interventions comes at the right time and will transform what we can achieve as a region, supporting inclusive and sustainable growth and delivering benefits to everyone who lives, works and studies here.

Jane Robinson
Dean of Engagement and Place at Newcastle University



“

A solid infrastructure is crucial to any regional economy but these forward-thinking plans are more than that, embracing innovation, strong digital capabilities and big data to allow businesses both physical and online access to new opportunities across the world. This blueprint is aspirational and deliverable, keeping people, communities and opportunities at its heart and it's fantastic to see how it supports the Strategic Economic Plan so every aspect is joined up.

Ammar Mirza
North East LEP Board's local SME representative



“

The TUC and unions have been doing an outstanding job in protecting jobs, rights, livelihoods and health and safety, working in partnership with employers and employer organisations. We support the acceleration of shovel-ready projects such as broadband, green technology and transport. We are committed to continue our work with partners in the region with an emphasis on good work practices and trade union engagement.

Beth Farhart
Regional Secretary, Northern TUC



Connected North East – our call to government

A Connected North East is our region’s mission to thrive beyond Covid-19. It is an investment programme in the opportunities of our new normal. Partnership with government will drive our programme forward and accelerate its many benefits.

We call on government to support us by investing £1 billion over the next five years in the Connected North East programme:

- £100 million invested in transport projects each year
- £100 million invested in supporting digital connectivity each year

And

- Devolve further powers to provide for integrated management of our transport network
- Sustain revenue funding to support public transport services
- Invest and upgrade our national infrastructure assets for our region, including the East Coast Main Line and major roads schemes.

By delivering key schemes such as sustainable access improvements and implementing smart connectivity solutions, our ambition of **healthy and vibrant places** will be realised.

Through schemes such as connected transport hubs and funding to support colleges and training providers to enhance our online offer, the region will be able to **connect communities to opportunities**.

By ensuring the region can deliver enabling infrastructure for our Enterprise Zones and other growth sites, and a 5G development fund, the region will have the **infrastructure to bring businesses here**.

Free flowing routes to our ports and airport enabled through enhanced connectivity and environmental performance initiatives will enhance **North East business advantage**.

Partner with us to deliver a **Connected North East**, giving businesses back their viability and the workforce back their employability. It is what we need to create and sustain 100,000 more and better jobs, reduce health inequality and support a decarbonised region.

Help us deliver a Connected North East

A more productive and resilient economy with a skilled workforce generating increased tax returns. Help us deliver a more active population, reducing burdens on the NHS. Help us to further decarbonise the North East. Help us to support our superb R&D capabilities, building a better future for the region and the UK.

