

Delivering for the North East

Annual Performance Report

2025/26




Kim McGuinness
North East
Mayor



Foreword

North East Mayor
Kim McGuinness

 Delivery is the first priority of my mayoralty because people across the North East deserve to see real improvements in their daily lives.

That's why this Mayoral Strategic Authority is structured around missions that matter to our residents and our businesses. They want change, our job is to deliver it.

People should be able to feel that devolved government improves their everyday life, and that economic growth follows.

The last two years has shown that determination, and the impact we have had by working with our councils on these shared missions.

From baby boxes to youth bus fares, childcare grants to offshore wind turbines, we turn up to work to make a difference in people's lives.

These investments are different in scale but connected in purpose: day to day improvements and longer-term change.

This focus is already showing results and people in this region understand that underpinning our delivery focus is the belief that our best way to improve people's lives is to support them during a cost of living crisis while at the same time investing to grow the North East economy. We can see that when we tell the story of our bus support and our investment in rivers and city centres.

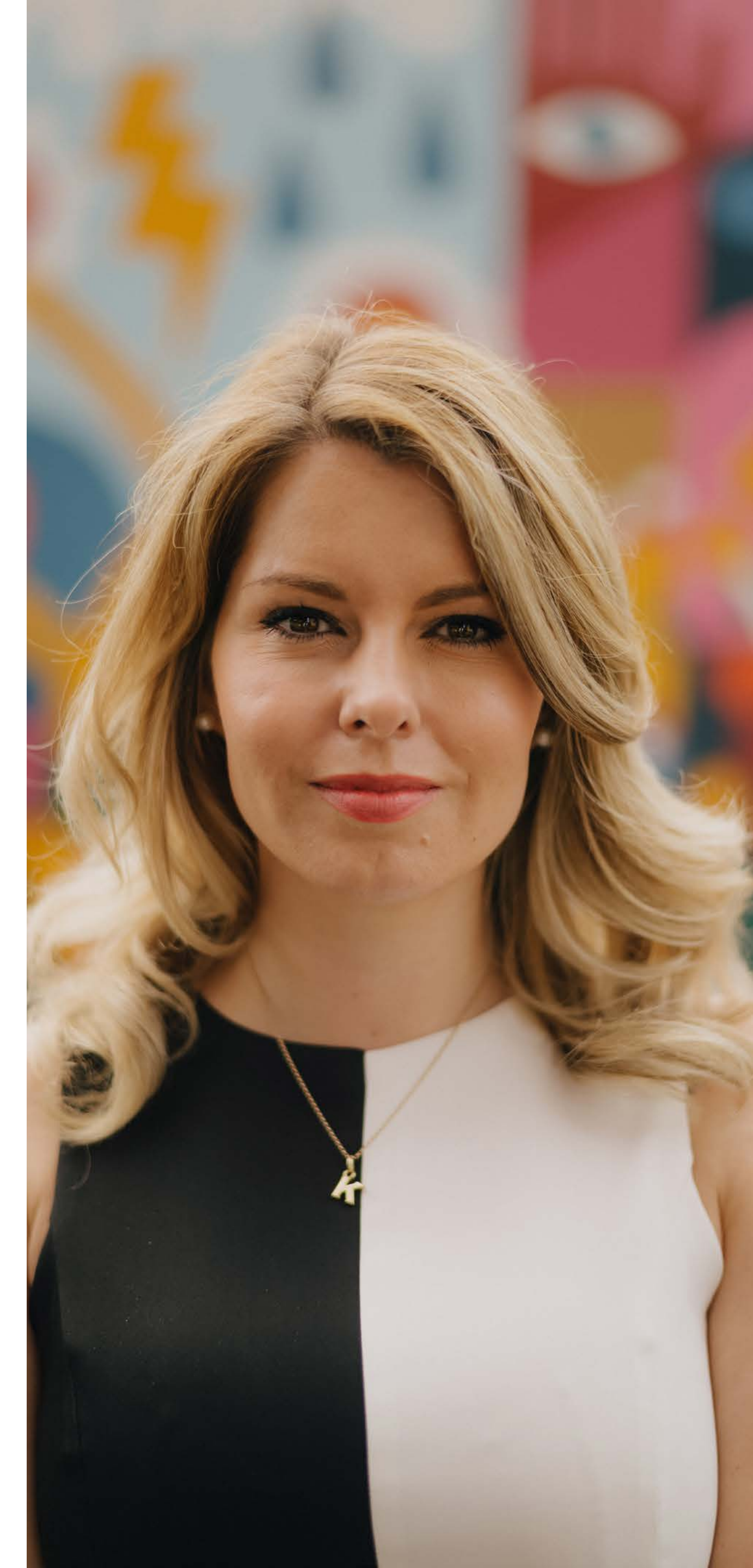
You can see in Durham or on the banks of the River Wear in Sunderland that this MSA is investing to create jobs. Whether it's £27m for job creation in Aykley Heads or the £38m for a film studio in Sunderland, we are showing this region has a plan for the future.

But our delivery record also shows interventions that matter today. We've capped bus fares across the North East, so when we create jobs, you can get a bus to them for £2.50. And for the first time ever, we brought down single Metro fares to £2.50 as well.

These Mayor's fares are keeping costs down for families and workers across our region. Helping with bills today. More good jobs for the future.

This report shows the progress we are making together, but it is only the start of what this region can achieve.

The North East has enormous strengths: talented people rooted-in proud identities working in industries with a global future. Our responsibility is to make sure those strengths are backed by investment, opportunity and a government focused on delivery.



Foreword

Chief Executive
Dr Henry Kippin

 This year has marked a significant step forward in realising the missions we set for the region. When we launched the Corporate Plan, we committed to turning a strong regional vision into meaningful action. Twelve months on, the results speak for themselves: our direction has held firm, our approach has matured, and the region has moved forward at pace.

Our role as an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority has continued to shape the way we operate.

The powers secured through our devolution arrangements have allowed us to accelerate delivery, respond quickly to local priorities, and take decisions with a clarity that reflects the needs of our communities.

What you will see in these pages is the cumulative effect of that momentum: programmes advancing at pace and investment reaching the people and places that need it most.

The progress we have made is rooted in partnership. The North East MSA is not a standalone institution - it is a shared endeavour with our seven councils, our business community, our colleges and universities, our voluntary sector, and our colleagues in central government. Over the past year, those relationships have matured and deepened. They have enabled us to unlock opportunities, overcome challenges and deliver outcomes that none of us could have achieved alone. That collective strength is one of the defining features of this region.

Inside the organisation, we have continued to evolve. We have welcomed new colleagues, strengthened our core functions and embedded approaches that make us more agile, analytical and confident in our delivery. We have embraced new tools and technologies, sharpened our focus, and ensured that every part of the organisation is aligned behind the commitments made by our Mayor and Cabinet.

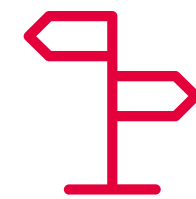
We have achieved this progress against a backdrop of international instability, economic uncertainty and a challenging regional baseline. The enduring nature of these challenges only reinforces the need to keep going and build on the gains we are making through devolution. My commitment to this is total.

I want to thank every member of the team for their continued dedication. This report reflects their commitment, resilience and belief in what the North East can achieve. In the year ahead, we will stay ambitious, stay collaborative and stay focused on delivering for the region.



Our role and resources

Our five Missions guide everything we do. The North East will be:



Home of real opportunity



A North East we are proud to call home



Home to a growing and vibrant economy for all



Home of the green energy revolution



A welcoming home to global trade

The North East Mayoral Strategic Authority (North East MSA or MSA) **exists to serve the people of the region.** Established in May 2024, it is a single mayor-led body that provides strong, unified regional leadership on the economy, transport, housing and public services - closer to communities than central government - **so that opportunities and quality of life improve for everyone living in the North East.**

The MSA is guided by five core missions, reflecting the manifesto commitments on which Mayor Kim McGuinness was elected as the first North East Mayor in May 2024. The Mayor sets the strategic direction of the MSA and chairs the Cabinet, made up of the political Leaders of the seven constituent Local Authorities alongside representatives from the business and voluntary sectors. **Together, they ensure that the missions are delivered and that decisions reflect the needs and ambitions of the region.**

Partnership is central to the region's success. The MSA works closely with organisations across the public, private, education and voluntary sectors, enabling the region to speak with one voice nationally and internationally. The North East is large enough to influence national policy yet connected enough to act decisively, **aligning transport, housing, skills and economic development in ways that deliver meaningful outcomes for people and places.**

The region's devolution journey began with the landmark 2022 deal, which transferred new powers and funding - **including a £1.4 billion Investment Fund over 30 years** - to a single mayoral combined authority. A deeper devolution deal followed in March 2024, moving the region towards **higher-tier powers, greater flexibility and a stronger role in shaping regional growth.** In May 2024, the new North East Combined Authority was formally established, consolidating several existing organisations and funding streams - including the former North of Tyne and North East combined authorities, Transport North East, the North East Local Enterprise Partnership and Invest North East England - into one unified regional body.

Since then, significant progress has been made in building a **high-performing Mayoral Strategic Authority.** The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act received Royal Assent in May 2026 and provides the national framework for the powers and responsibilities of strategic authorities. Government has confirmed the North East's position as an 'Established Mayoral Strategic Authority' within the highest tier of MSAs and agreed a new Integrated Settlement for the North East from 2026-27: **a single £1.87 billion three-year funding framework to support inclusive regional growth.** Alongside the £1.4 billion Investment Fund, this now forms the core of the region's devolved resources.

These powers and funding streams have enabled the MSA to invest in the things that make **a real difference to people's lives** - reducing transport costs, supporting people into work, helping children and families, and harnessing the region's economic strengths. We will continue to maximise the impact of our devolved funding through a **joined-up, outcomes-focused approach aligned to our missions,** while pressing Government for further powers and investment to make the **North East the home of real opportunity.**



Our Performance Management Framework

Our ambitions are transformational, and we know that meaningful change doesn't happen overnight. That's why progress and accountability are central to our approach.

Our Performance Management Framework (PMF) has been developed through a rigorous and collaborative process, drawing on best practice and shaped through extensive co-production with colleagues across the organisation and key partners. It has been subject to robust check-and-challenge from Cabinet to ensure clarity, accountability and strategic focus. The framework is fully aligned with our missions whilst also enabling us to report against the Integrated Settlement Outcomes Framework to Government, providing a clear, coherent and evidence-led approach to tracking progress and demonstrating impact.

Through our PMF, we will track and demonstrate impact across four key themes:



Together, these elements form a coherent structure that ensures resources are targeted effectively to deliver measurable impact. The PMF operates alongside well-established business monitoring and risk management processes.

As part of the framework, Cabinet receives two formal performance reports each year: an Annual Performance Report at its annual meeting in June and a six-monthly performance update in December.



Our Impact since May 2024



Our Impact since May 2024

£70M
North East Fund launched with £7m already invested in 21 businesses.

58
Community projects
supported through Mayor's Opportunity Fund

Major Mayoral Development Zones
approved for Sunderland, Newcastle and Gateshead and Durham.

Invested **£37M**
into our Investment Zones enabling innovation and industrial growth infrastructure.

Published the **Mayor's Local Transport Plan**
following consultation with over 16,000 members of the public and backed by £1.85bn investment.

Working closely with Homes England via a Strategic Place Partnership
to unlock thousands of new homes.

Supported over **2,500 businesses**
with 1,000 receiving one-to-one guidance.

Our Flexible Social Finance Fund has provided **£1.5M+**
of loans to 16 organisations.

Agreed a **£104M**
package to turbocharge the region's creative industries.

Published the Mayor's Plan for Green Jobs to create **25,000 new green jobs by 2035.**

Started the process to develop the Angel Network
and bring buses back under public control.

And much more...



Over **400 businesses**
signed up to SHINE - our tailored North East good employer standard.

Unlocked over **£1.8Bn** of investment
through access to an Integrated Settlement.

Launched a **High-streets commission.**

Secured the UK's first **AI Growth Zone**
which is expected to create more than 5,000 new jobs and bring £30 billion investment.

Plans are underway to **extend the Metro to Washington and re-open the Leamside Line.**

Home of real opportunity

The North East is a great place to live and work, yet too many people still face barriers that hold them back. We will act to remove these barriers, ensuring the benefits of a growing economy and strong public services reach every part of the region.



The North East is a great place to live and work, yet too many people still face barriers that hold them back. We will act to remove these barriers, ensuring the benefits of a growing economy and strong public services reach every part of the region.

This means ensuring that people of all ages and backgrounds can develop their skills, access good-quality, well-paid jobs, and build fulfilling careers in a region they are proud to call home. This includes helping people build the essential skills they need to access work, as well as those specialist skills required for our key growth sectors and the North East's foundational economy.

It also means providing targeted support for children, young people and families as we work to create a more equitable society. Our ambition is a North East where every baby, child and young person is supported to thrive and achieve their potential — no matter their background or where they live.

We will work in close partnership with local authorities, public sector partners such as health services, businesses, the third sector and trade unions. By bringing these partners together, we can align expertise, resources, and leadership to really make a difference for our people.



Home of real opportunity

Delivery Achievements

Since the North East MSA was established in May 2024, we have already taken significant steps to spread opportunity right across our region.

Tackling Child Poverty

We have co-developed the first regional 'Child Poverty Action Plan', backed by £28.6m of investment to kickstart delivery of the most comprehensive and coordinated regional intervention of its kind in England to tackle child poverty in the North East. As part of this, we have established the country's first 'Child Poverty Reduction Unit' and convened a 350-strong regional summit to drive action.

Distributed 1,905 Baby Boxes to families. In January 2026, the 'Port of Tyne' became the first commercial business to invest in the Child Poverty Action Plan, enabling the delivery of 120 extra baby boxes.

Supported 1,493 families with young children with essential items via Love, Amelia and Durham Start for Life Fund.

Unlocked £1.66m in annualised income gains for families because of commissioned information, advice and guidance on entitlements and financial wellbeing.

Supported 30 families with childcare costs through the Mayor's Childcare Grant pilot.

Improving Educational Outcomes and Career Transitions

The 'Excellence in Education' programme - reducing exclusions, supporting vulnerable pupils, boosting literacy, reading fluency, oracy and cultural capital, and improving teacher retention - has supported 738 schools and 174,202 pupils, delivering measurable gains in literacy and reading fluency, with early signs of improved attendance among targeted groups.

Strengthened careers education through the North East Ambition Careers Hub, improving outcomes and reducing NEET risk by providing bespoke support to young people and schools. High quality careers advice has been given to **22,389 young people and 776 regional employers** have been supported to engage with schools to tackle educational inequalities.

Building a More Inclusive Economy

Delivered three rounds of the Mayor's Opportunity Fund, which awarded **£450,000 in grants to 58 community projects** focusing on community cohesion, inclusion and resilience and older people (65+) to support thousands of residents living in some of our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Developed a £12m Community Impact Fund to support the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector to prepare for major national funding opportunities.

Delivering a New Deal for North East Workers

Launched our five-year plan to bring together skills support, job creation, and good employer campaigns under 'New Deal for North East Workers'. The **Mayor's Plans for Green Jobs and for Culture**,

Creative Industries and Sport have been launched and sector delivery plans across all **key sectors identified in the Local Growth Plan** and **three priority Foundational Economy sectors** are being developed, supported by a detailed analysis of employer skills needs through the Local Skills Improvement Plan.

Invested £139.4m in Adult Skills since May 2024, creating **140,000 enrolment opportunities** across key sectors, including new childcare workforce, foundation learning and construction skills programmes. **65,000 residents** have enrolled, completing **107,000 learning aims**, including **68,000 formal qualifications**.

Strengthening Skills for Jobs

We have strengthened requirements for skills providers to align provision with the strategic priorities in the 'New Deal for North East Workers' and increased investment in priority sectors in the Local Growth Plan. This includes **£15.6m for Health & Social Care** in the foundational economy, creating **14,400 enrolment opportunities** and delivering specialist higher-level courses to address persistent mid-level skills shortages.

Participation on programmes at Level 3 has increased through the 'Free Courses for Jobs' programme. Since May 2024, **over £7m has been invested in Level 3 provision** resulting in **2,219 Level 3 qualifications achieved** in key areas such as Advanced Manufacturing, Digital and Tech, Adult Care, Childcare and Hospitality.

11,640 residents have undertaken a Skills Bootcamp programme since May 2024, over 4,000 have entered

employment as a direct result of the programme, this includes key sectors such as green construction (retrofit), clean energy, engineering and manufacturing.

Launched the **£4m Create Talent Programme** to equip local people with the skills and support needed to enter the region's growing creative industries. Working with partners across music, screen, writing and publishing - including Generator, The NewBridge Project, ITV Signpost and New Writing North - the programme will provide hundreds of residents with training, work experience, networking and mentoring over its three-year span.

Health and Employability programmes

Launched our five-year £49m Connect to Work programme to support people with disabilities, health conditions or complex barriers into work — and to help them stay in work through better job fit and retention support.

The North East is one of eight national **Economic Inactivity (EI) Trailblazer** areas, testing the most effective ways to remove health related barriers to work and **improve future public service delivery**. The programme brings together health, employment and skills services and has been extended into a second year, with a sharper focus on job outcomes and supporting employers - particularly SMEs - to build healthy, diverse workforces. In its first year, EI Trailblazer projects supported over **2,000 people** closer to work and engaged **300+ employers**. In March 2026, we brought together **160+ women** supported through the programme to celebrate their achievements, connect with peers and reflect on progress across the EI Trailblazer journey.

Home of real opportunity

2026-28 Short-term pledges

The refreshed North East MSA Corporate Plan (2026-2030) sets out the Mayor's key short-term commitments to drive delivery of our five missions and improve people's lives. Delivery is already underway across all pledges to make the North East the Home of Real Opportunity, with more progress to come over the next two years.



Short-term pledge

What we've achieved and what's to come

Deliver the Child Poverty Action Plan to reduce the number of children living in relative poverty after housing costs

The first regional Child Poverty Action Plan has launched, marking the most comprehensive regional effort in England to reduce child poverty in the North East, backed by **£28.6m** to kickstart delivery. Seven interventions are already supporting families – **including practical support for families with young children and access to financial support**, with seven more interventions due to begin next year. The region will reconvene around the plan in July 2026 at the **second Home of Real Opportunity Child Poverty Summit**.

Use the New Deal for North East Workers to build a better skilled and more diverse workforce in our key sectors, including the Foundational Economy

The New Deal for North East Workers, launched in July 2025, provides a single, joined-up framework for skills, employer engagement, job creation and job quality. In March 2026, Cabinet approved a **£241m adult skills programme for 2026/27 to 2028/29**, with the programme expected to engage **36,000 residents per year** and support **25,000 job outcomes over three years**. In addition to this, £7m will expand construction training capacity through CTEC and partner colleges, while a further £9m will strengthen capacity across the MSA's key sectors. Over the next year, we will publish delivery plans for our key growth and priority foundational economy sectors to set out the region's jobs, skills and economic development opportunities.

Improve education and destination outcomes for young people in the North East, decreasing the number not in employment, education or training (NEET)

By March 2028, we will deliver consistent careers offer with full regional coverage, ensure every pupil in Key Stages 3 and 4 receives at least one meaningful workplace experience, and improve sustained destinations for around **65,000 Year 11 leavers**. Our targeted Work Experience Pilot will also provide 1,250 young people with additional barriers with bespoke workplace experiences, while the Excellence in Education Programme will support **200,000 pupils across 740 schools**.

Through innovative Trailblazer and Connect to Work programmes, deliver our priority of moving more people into employment and economic activity.

Backed by £85m, our Health and Employability Programmes are widening access to employment support across the North East, **with over 8,000 people supported to date** and more than **14,000 more expected to benefit by 2030**. In partnership with Jobcentre Plus, Integrated Care Boards and the VCSE sector, we are creating a more joined-up **"no wrong front door"** system. With almost half of referrals coming from young people aged 18-24, we are keeping a sharp focus on youth employment, while our work as a Vanguard Region is helping shape future delivery through evidence, employer engagement and a Healthy Working Lifecycle approach.

Case study: Supporting residents to overcome barriers to employment (Stacey's story)

For several years, Stacey's world had become very small. After the sudden loss of her children's father, she was left managing grief, parenting and day-to-day life on her own.

The anxiety that followed affected every part of her life. Once a confident hairdresser with a long career behind her, she found herself stepping away from work and becoming economically inactive while caring for her two children. Her routine narrowed to the essentials: the school run, shopping, and getting through each day. As Stacey put it, "I had no confidence... I would only go out of the house to take the kids to school or do the shopping."

What Stacey needed was not a quick fix, but support that understood her whole situation. Through the EI Trailblazer, and following initial engagement with Wise Steps, she began receiving support from Newcastle Futures. The help she received was flexible and built around her needs, including her wellbeing and childcare responsibilities. Rather than being treated as a number on a programme, Stacey was supported as a person, with one-to-one coaching, confidence-building activities, help with her CV and job applications, and access to short courses that helped her start rebuilding structure, skills and self-belief. What made the difference most of all was the relationship with her adviser. In Stacey's words, "She really just seen me as a person... and genuinely wanted to help."

Over time, that support helped Stacey begin to see a future for herself again. With steady encouragement and practical help, she rebuilt her confidence, improved her wellbeing and developed a stronger daily routine. After around seven years out of work, she moved into a structured employability apprenticeship — a major step forward that once may have felt out of reach. But the change was about more than employment alone. Stacey reconnected with support services, rebuilt social connections and started to recognise her own strengths again.

The impact has been felt across her whole family. Stacey says her children have seen the difference in her — happier, more motivated, and back in work. She now uses her own lived experience in her role to support other residents facing similar barriers, including anxiety, low confidence and caring responsibilities. That means her journey is now helping others too, offering empathy and reassurance from someone who genuinely understands what it can take to move forward. As Stacey says, "I'm a totally different person... I know there's so much support out there." She also describes securing the apprenticeship as "lifechanging for the full family."

Stacey's story is a strong example of what it means to make the North East the Home of Real Opportunity. It shows how targeted, person-centred support can help remove barriers, rebuild confidence and create a route into good work for residents who may have been out of the labour market for years. It also highlights the value of trusted relationships, flexibility and a wellbeing-first approach in helping people take that next step.



Case study: Supporting communities through the Mayor's Opportunity Fund

The Mayor's Opportunity Fund is backing local organisations to tackle the real challenges people face in their day-to-day lives across the North East, and create opportunity right across the region. It invests in grassroots groups, supporting practical, community-led projects to provide practical, community-led help for residents experiencing poverty, exclusion and isolation.

We have allocated £1 million to the Mayor's Opportunity Fund, with three rounds of funding either in progress or completed to date, and this is making a real difference in the heart of our communities.

Over 36,000 people have taken part in activities funded through this work, ranging from; dementia-friendly music sessions, to lunch clubs and warm spaces to tackle isolation, to fuel poverty prevention projects for those affected by the cost of living crisis, and funding to improve youth and community groups, plus many more.

Participant feedback shows the personal impact this support is having in people's lives. People have described making new friends, improving their mental and physical health, and gaining a stronger sense of belonging. Others have spoken about feeling accepted, less isolated and more connected to those around them.

Feedback like this, highlights the power and importance of the Fund - "The club gave me a space where I felt accepted and part of something bigger. That sense of belonging lifted my mood, reduced feelings of isolation, and gave me a regular reason to leave the house and stay active—both of which helped my mental health. Being in a supportive environment also encouraged me to open up and listen to others."

By backing community-led support in priority communities, the Mayor's Opportunity Fund is helping tackle barriers to opportunity and delivering on the Home of Real Opportunity mission. It also provides a strong foundation for future community-led investment, with next steps focused on tracking outcomes, capturing learning from delivery and using that evidence to shape future inclusion programmes across the North East.

The fund is designed to allow us to address our communities most pressing issues, such as the cost of living crisis. By backing local organisations who understand these challenges, and know how best to support local residents, we can actively provide targeted and dedicated support. This can include; providing free & low cost warm meals and warm spaces to gather, clothes banks to help reduce costs for parents, community laundry services for those unable to afford this, benefits, debt & financial advice to those in need.



A North East we're proud to call home

Where we live matters.

People in the North East are rightly proud of their local identity and want the places and infrastructure that enables them to build good lives here.

We will deliver the strategies and programmes that make this possible — from better, more affordable transport that allows people to move around the region with ease, to increased affordable and social housing, to a thriving creative sector, sustainable rural communities and support for businesses to create fairer, safer and more fulfilling workplaces through the SHINE programme.

We will be guided by the priorities of local people, directing investment and action toward what our communities value most.



Delivery Achievements

Since the North East MSA was established in May 2024, we have already taken significant steps to make the North East a place we're proud to call home:

Housing

In addition to our £49m Brownfield Housing Fund programmes, which will unlock over 3,000 new homes through land remediation, demolition and enabling works, we secured an additional £22m investment to drive development of 1,222 additional new homes on brownfield sites in Ashington, Blyth, Scotswood, Easington Colliery, and Riverside Sunderland's Mayoral Development Zone. Therefore, across all our brownfield programmes, over 4,000 new homes will be developed, with 1,610 houses currently under construction and 573 homes fully constructed. Delivery will continue up to March 2029.

Work is ongoing with Homes England and Local Authority partners as part of the Strategic Place Partnership to identify key strategic priority sites across the region to deliver more social and affordable homes, better quality homes, and increase housing market choice. This process is considering phasing, deliverability, viability and resources required to unlock ambition including the £143m National Housing Delivery Fund, £120m City Densification Fund and £1.1 billion Homes England Social and Affordable Homes Programme.

The Capital Regeneration Programme is now in delivery phase with £67.3m contracted and works ongoing. The programme supports a range of strategic regeneration interventions across the region and is delivering enabling infrastructure works to unlock employment land, public realm to support place shaping and boosting cultural assets within the region.

Development of the Homelessness Prevention Blueprint is continuing with partners. Consultation and data collection is underway alongside further alignment with the National Plan to End Homelessness published in December 2025, which sets out the role of MSAs. A further £5.3m has been secured from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for reducing rough sleeping and improving the provision of supported housing and support services.

Place

Approved £17m funding to support jobs and local communities through a new Environmental Stewardship, Coast and Rural Growth Investment Plan.

Approved the £8.5m Rural Growth Programme that will provide an integrated approach to rural business support and advice across Northumberland, Durham and Gateshead with sector specific support relating to land-based industries and the food and drink sector. The programme is currently live and supporting businesses across the region.

The High Streets Commission has been established and continues to meet and develop its action plan. A new High Street Index is in development to track high street vibrancy, identify challenges and guide investment priorities. The Commission is also considering a Power to Change High Street Demonstrator to support socially trading organisations and community businesses as long-term partners in high street renewal, with Stanley and Gateshead proposed as priority areas. It is planning a High Street Event for the autumn to showcase innovation and shape future interventions, with these proposals due for consideration in May 2026.

The Spatial Development Strategy is actively in development, with established governance, and developing data and digital requirements. £1.5m has been secured from MHCLG and recruitment to the core planning team is underway.



A North East we're proud to call home

Transport

Published the **Mayor's Local Transport Plan** following consultation with over **16,000 people** supporting the ambition to create a green, integrated transport network that works for all. Since the formation of the North East MSA, over **£400m** has been invested in the region's transport network to date and **£1.85bn** of the Government's Transport for City Regions fund has been secured to deliver the Mayor's Local Transport Plan over the period 2027/28 to 2031/32.

The **Mayor's Fares** have been extended to March 2027, utilising **£32m of Bus Grant funding** per year and now also applies to fares on the Tyne and Wear Metro and Northumberland Line.

Up to March 2026, more than **95 million trips** had been taken using The Mayor's Fares, saving customers an estimated **£70m**. The latest data shows that bus usage in the North East **increased by 8%** in 2024/25 (115.8m journeys, compared to 107.2m journeys in 2023/24), this rise coincides with the Mayor's Fares initiative.



2,695 free region-wide travel passes — covering bus, Metro and ferry — have been issued to **care-experienced young people**, enabling **over 250,000 journeys to date**. Cabinet approved further funding in March 2026 to continue the scheme into 2026/27.

Funded **Great North Run Rover** wristbands gave local people and visitors unlimited travel across local transport services for £6 on the day of the Great North Run with 30,185 wristbands sold for last year's event.

Launched the **'Days Out By Bus' initiative** which offers visitors and residents up to 25% off at 36 attractions across the North East.

The bus network is growing for the first time in years. Commercial bus mileage grew by 6% in 2024/25. This reverses a trend of mileage reductions averaging 6% per year over the previous five years. Funding from the MSA is directly supporting 171 different bus routes across the region.

The Mayor was elected on a clear mandate to bring buses back into public control — and major progress is now underway. The draft **Bus Franchising Scheme Assessment (FSA)** has been completed, a significant achievement built on expert analysis and region-wide engagement. Cabinet has reviewed the FSA and agreed to move forward to the next statutory stages: audit followed by public consultation. This marks a pivotal milestone in delivering bus reform, one of the Mayor's central priorities.

To support the **'making transport safe for women and girls'** theme identified in the Local Transport Plan, work has started on a **£2.1m package of new Metro gate-lines**, with new gate-lines at Regent Centre operational and works on a further two stations expected to start in Autumn 2026.

A study is underway into the safety of women and girls on the transport network. This work will improve our understanding of the challenges and barriers women and girls face when travelling in the North East and identify a **package of interventions** to further improve safety and security on the transport network.

A **£13.3m** programme of investment to improve over 1,000 bus stops across the whole region has begun.

To enable passengers to access a **new real-time information system**, 600 new and upgraded passenger information displays are being installed at bus stops and stations across the region. 1,400 of the region's buses have been equipped with new on-board digital location devices, complemented by a programme of upgrades to over 400 signalised junctions and crossings.

£18.7m of funding for Nexus was approved to deliver the **new Shields Ferry landing** at the Fish Quay to help grow the existing 400,000 annual passenger numbers and provide vital transport access to education, jobs and cultural attractions in South and North Tyneside. Work has started and is due to complete in November 2028.

Work continues to deliver the **Metro to Washington major scheme**, with over 400 local people taking part in engagement events to find out more. The scheme proposes to extend the Metro from Pelaw to South Hylton via Washington, connecting tens of thousands of residents from the Washington area into the network. Development of the Outline Business Case is underway.

Secured multi-million-pound investment from the Government to update **Metro's vital signal technology**, which will help improve the reliability of the Metro and prepare for its expansion to Washington.



Government's inclusion of the **Leamside Line** as part of the **Northern Powerhouse Rail** announcement marks a significant endorsement of the Mayor and Cabinet's plans to deliver a new rail line for passengers and freight. A feasibility study is being carried out and work is starting on the Strategic Outline Business Case.

A North East we're proud to call home

Approved **£10.9m** of funding to ensure **Northumberland Park Station**, on the Northumberland Line rail route, was completed as planned in February 2026, connecting people in North Tyneside directly to the national rail network for the first time in decades, as well as creating seamless links with local transport services.

The December 2025 **East Coast Mainline timetable** brought **increased service frequencies and faster journey times** from the North East to London, including a new Lumo open access service which the Mayor helped to secure. The Mayor also successfully pushed for **additional capacity** between Durham and Newcastle in the AM weekday peak. The same timetable changes also delivered improvements on the Durham Coast Line, meaning Sunderland now benefits from two trains per hour to Newcastle, Hartlepool, Stockton and Middlesbrough.

11.25 miles of new high-quality walking, wheeling and cycling routes have been delivered across the region to enable a joined-up walking and cycling network.

A record number of pedestrians and cyclists are using the **Tyne Pedestrian and Cyclist Tunnels** since they reopened in August 2019 following a major refurbishment project, with an 8% increase in 2025 from the previous year. The refurbishment project included the installation of new inclined lifts, improving access for cyclists and wheelchair users.

£6.3m of funding was awarded to Newcastle City Council for the **Tyne Bridge refurbishment scheme**.



A North East we're proud to call home

2026-28 Short-term pledges

The refreshed North East MSA Corporate Plan (2026-2030) sets out the Mayor's key short-term commitments to drive delivery of our five missions and improve people's lives. Delivery is already underway across all pledges to make the North East a place we are proud to call home, with much more progress to come over the next two years.

Short-term pledge	What we've achieved and what's to come
<p>Continue to deliver affordable bus travel to grow patronage, improving access to jobs, skills, education and leisure.</p>	<p>The Mayor's Fares have been extended until 2027 and now cover the Metro and Northumberland Line. On Bus, up to March 2026, more than 95 million trips had been taken using The Mayor's Fares, saving customers an estimated £70m. The latest data shows that bus usage in the North East increased by 8% in 2024/25 (115.8m journeys), coinciding with the Mayor's Fares initiative.</p> <p>Government commitment to maintaining the £3 national cap on single bus fares remains essential to sustaining the relative affordability of regional discounted travel initiatives such as the Mayor's Fares.</p>
<p>Produce a business case which sets out costs, location and design of new metro stations for the expansion of the Metro to Washington</p>	<p>As part of a £1.85bn transport deal secured with Treasury, the Metro will be expanded for the first time in 30 years, connecting Washington to the network. Work to develop the outline business case is underway and due to be completed in early 2027.</p>
<p>Make bus and Metro stations safer and increase the perception of safety across the transport network</p>	<p>New gate-lines have been installed at Regent Centre Metro station, with work on a further two stations expected to commence later this calendar year. A total of 197 bus stops have been upgraded across the region, through the Mayor's programme of bus stop improvements which will upgrade 1,167 stops across the region by 2027.</p> <p>A study to better understand safety issues faced by women and girls when travelling in the North East has commenced, the findings will be used to identify a package of interventions which will improve safety and security for women and girls on the transport network for delivery from 2027.</p>
<p>Take the decision to bring buses under public control to support the 'Angel Network'</p>	<p>In March 2026, Cabinet considered the draft Franchising Scheme Assessment and agreed to obtain a report from an independent auditor on the assessment. Subject to a positive outcome to the audit, a statutory and public consultation will commence in the summer.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the decision on whether to franchise or not will be made in early 2027 followed by mobilisation and transition work if the decision is to implement a Franchising Scheme.</p> <p>Subject to this decision, it is expected that the first services in public control would enter service in late 2029.</p>

A North East we're proud to call home

Short-term pledge

What we've achieved and what's to come

<p>Secure clear government commitment to upgrading the Moor Farm roundabout</p>	<p>Following the inclusion of major improvements to the A19 at Moor Farm Junction within the Road Investment Strategy 3 development pipeline, National Highways are now developing the scheme so that construction can start in 2031.</p>
<p>Improve Metro punctuality and reliability</p>	<p>Metro punctuality and reliability in 2025/26 have improved compared with 2023/24 (before the MSA was formally established and Mayor elected). As more Class 555 trains enter service and fleet availability improves, Metro performance is continuing to strengthen.</p> <p>Nexus remains on track to have all 46 new trains available for customer service by the end of 2026. A series of projects is also underway to further improve punctuality and reliability, including enhancements to the Metro Control Room, the Metro Asset Renewal Programme to improve infrastructure and assets, and the re-signalling project.</p>
<p>Collaborate with regional delivery partners to develop new housing projects, including the delivery of social housing</p>	<p>The MSA is working with local and national partners to unlock and build new housing, including social and affordable homes, supported by fully contracted Brownfield Housing Fund schemes unlocking over 4,000 homes and major additional investment.</p> <p>An Affordable Homes Working Group has been established as part of the North East Strategic Place Partnership which will be overseeing and shaping the delivery of the £1.1bn Social and Affordable Homes Programme managed by Homes England.</p> <p>Bids for this funding are now being appraised with final approvals expected late summer 2026. This will clarify the delivery quantum and profile but it is expected that over 60% of the programme will deliver homes for social rent.</p>
<p>Introduce a homelessness blueprint to reduce homelessness across the North East</p>	<p>We are developing an evidence base and a partnership consultation to ensure our approach is based on data and evidence. Our approach will also be in line with the national plan to end Homelessness. We are designing and prioritising investment proposals for the £5.3m secured from MHCLG to help reduce rough sleeping and improve the supporting housing and wider support offer.</p>

A North East we're proud to call home

Short-term pledge

What we've achieved and what's to come

Support small high street businesses through the High Street Commission

The high-street commission was developed in 2025 to develop a strategic, long-term plan to re-imagine and revitalise the region's high streets, supporting the local economy through coordinated, evidence-based and community-focused regeneration.

The Commission remains focused on selecting two to three transformational '**Power to Change High Street Demonstrator**' locations, with an emphasis on mixed-use regeneration and long-term replicable models. An evidence-led approach is being taken to select the areas.

Introduce a Spatial Development Strategy to shape long-term growth and deliver the strategic objectives of the Local Growth Plan

The Spatial Development Strategy is actively in development, supported by newly secured **£1.55m** MHCLG funding to continue evidence gathering, governance and programme mobilisation through to 2029. A **public consultation** is due to take place in 2027, ahead of the strategy being finalised.





Recent Headline Performance of our Metro and Ferry services

Nexus is the public body which owns and operates Metro and the Shields Ferry, as part of its role delivering public transport in Tyne and Wear on behalf of the Mayor, Cabinet and Mayoral Strategic Authority.

Following **£362m investment**, all 46 new class 555 Metro trains have been delivered to the Gosforth depot, with 33 trains in customer service or ready for driver training. By summer 2026, Nexus plan to have 100% of the Metro service Monday-Friday operated by the new metro trains and are on track to have all 46 trains available for customer service by the end of 2026.

In April 2026, **Metro fares were lowered for the first time ever**, when the Mayor's Fares were launched on Metro, which caps single journeys at a maximum of £2.50 and day tickets at no more than £5.00 when using Pop 'Pay As You Go' on Metro and on the Northumberland Line, making travel more affordable for passengers. During the first month of Mayor's Fares, over 300,000 £2.50 journeys were recorded.

Overall, Metro performance has shown improvement across several measures, when comparing 2025/26 data with data for 2023/24 (before the MSA was formally established and the Mayor elected). With the introduction of the new Class 555 trains steadily increasing, as well as improved fleet availability, **Metro performance consistently shows improvement.**

This section covers Metro and Ferry performance from April 2025 to March 2026 and, where applicable, provides a performance comparison with 2023/24. During this period:

Metro patronage

- Patronage was 31.4m, which was 0.9% below the target of 31.6m journeys. Whilst Metro patronage was below target for the financial year, this still represents an improvement on 2023/24, before the start of the current Mayoral term, where patronage was 30.7m. This represents an **increase of 0.7m journeys in this period.**
- Patronage in 2025/26 has been impacted in recent months, with the causes thought to be adverse weather as well as external economic factors impacting personal finances. These factors are particularly impactful on discretionary journeys, which currently make up the largest proportion of all Metro journeys.

Metro punctuality and reliability

- Nexus operated 95.0% of its scheduled Metro timetable, which was 1.0% above target. For the 2023/24, Nexus operated 91.9% of its scheduled Metro timetable. This represents an **improvement of 3.1%** over the reporting period.
- Metro punctuality was 83.7%. Despite this being 3.5% below target, this shows significant improvement in comparison to 2023/24, in which Metro punctuality was 75.9%. This represents an **improvement of 7.8%** in this period.

- Metro performance in 2025/26 shows a clear upward trend, with reliability and punctuality improving on both 2024/25 and 2023/24. Fleet-related reliability issues are still the largest contributor to lost performance, but they have begun to decline. The final quarter of 2025/26 stands out, thanks to more **Class 555** trains entering service and strengthening day-to-day operations.
- Nexus is also benefiting from better fleet availability and longer distances between faults - exactly the kind of pattern expected as a new fleet beds in. This has helped reduce the number of service problems linked to the fleet. Updated winter preparedness plans have further supported performance, with noticeably fewer rail-adhesion issues than in previous years.

Metro Customer Satisfaction

All customer satisfaction scores have improved over the last two years:

- Overall Metro customer satisfaction was **7.5** (out of 10), which was level with the target, and higher than in 2023/24 where it was 7.3 (out of 10).
- Metro customer satisfaction with the value for money of their ticket was **7.4** (out of 10) compared to 6.8 in 2023/24
- Satisfaction with the range of tickets available was **7.7** (out of 10) compared to 7.5 in 2023/24.
- Satisfaction with the facilities for buying tickets was **7.6** (out of 10) compared to 7.2 in 2023/24.

Metro safety

- Metro customer perception of safety and security was **7.2** (out of 10), compared to 7.2/10 in 2023/24.
- Customer perception of safety and security for women was **7.2** (out of 10), with customer perception of safety and security for men in 2025/26 at 7.3 (out of 10).
- There were on average **62.5** crimes per million passenger journeys on Metro, with an average of **16.6 anti-social behaviour incidents** per million passenger journeys.
- As mentioned on **page 14**, there is significant work underway to improve safety across the Metro network.

Shields Ferry

- Patronage and performance of the Shields Ferry have been understandably impacted by the recent suspension of the Ferry service. Storm Chandra caused substantial damage to the North Shields landing on 29 January 2026, leading to an immediate safety-related closure. Following repair works, specialist monitoring equipment has been installed and reviewed to support a safe reopening. The service resumed on 27 April 2026.
- Patronage was 355,355, which was 16.2% below the target of 423,814. Patronage for 2023/24 was 380,554.
- Reliability was 80.6%, which was 18.4% below the target of 99% compared to 98% in 2023/24.
- Punctuality was 99.4%, which was 0.4% above the target of 99% compared to 99% in 2023/24.
- Customer satisfaction score was 8.9, which is below the target of 9.0 compared to 9.0 in 2023/24.

😊 Home to a growing and vibrant economy for all

Growing our economy is essential to the region's long-term success

We will support the creation of thousands of jobs across the North East, driving higher employment and rising take-home pay. We have identified the sectors where the North East has clear strengths, assets and opportunities — and we will work to realise their full potential. Through our other missions, we will also ensure that people have the skills needed to access these jobs, and the transport networks to reach them.

We will work closely with businesses, universities and the research and innovation catapults to unlock greater levels of research and development (R&D), and innovation funding. We will support the region's transition to a digitally enabled economy that helps people enter, stay in and progress within work. And we will ensure that economic growth reaches every part of the North East, with targeted support for rural and coastal communities.

Delivery Achievements

Since the North East MSA was established in May 2024, we have already taken significant steps to grow a vibrant regional economy for all:

Following a period of consultation and engagement with Government and a wide range of stakeholders, the **North East Local Growth Plan, 'Creating Real Opportunity'**, was finalised and approved by Cabinet. The plan sets out key priorities for growing the region's economy and improving living standards.

Announced **£104m** investment to turbocharge the region's creative industries increasing new jobs and opportunities for local people. The investment will support **Crown Works Phase 1 in Sunderland**, help ready **Gateshead Quays** for a new 12,500-15,000 seat arena, and **£36m** to boost creative businesses and the visitor economy **across the region**.



Strengthened the North East's **screen and production sector** through continued investment in the North East Screen Industries Partnership, with total programme investment reaching **£7.5m** to support film and TV production and deliver additional grants.

Backed new creative and cultural infrastructure, including Quayside Recording Studios (£1.79m), BOHO Arts inclusive creative hub (£0.96m), the Tyne Theatre and Opera House (£0.53m), Grainger Market Creative Workspaces (£1.7m), Blyth Cultural Hub (£2.5m), Sunnyside Creative Hub (£2.4m) and Berwick Barracks (£0.84m), creating new spaces for production, collaboration and community engagement across the region.

Relaunched the **£1.5m North East Culture and Creative Investment Programme** in partnership with Creative UK, which has already exceeded targets supporting over 20 businesses, leveraging £1.76m in match funding and creating, or safeguarding, more than **40 jobs**.

Funded and supported a programme of major cultural and sporting events to raise the region's profile and drive economic impact, including the MOBO Awards, Mercury Awards, Women's Rugby World Cup opening match in Sunderland, BBC Radio 1 Big Weekend, and a wide range of regional festivals delivered through the **£2.62m Early Priority Events Programme**.



Developed the region's events and visitor economy infrastructure, including investment to establish a new regional tourism body - **Experience North East England** - and funding to support major future events such as UEFA Euro 2028 matches in Newcastle.

Supported growth of the music and wider creative sectors through targeted interventions, including the establishment of the **Northern Music Export Office** and investment in the **regional Music Industry Cluster**.

Backed a new **Centre for Writing** with a **£2m investment**, which will create new opportunities and careers for local people in the creative industries.

Approved **£37m** funding for five projects in the **North East Investment Zone**, including new skills facilities for the automotive and **offshore energy clusters**, and site infrastructure to facilitate new inward investment at **NETPark**. Funding is focused on enabling innovation and industrial growth infrastructure and will **create thousands of jobs**.

😊 Home to a growing and vibrant economy for all

Working with UK Research and Innovation and our Local Innovation Steering Group, we have developed a portfolio of innovation projects to unlock the **£30m Local Innovation Partnerships Fund**, focused on clusters with the greatest potential to deliver sustainable, long-term impact and create new jobs.



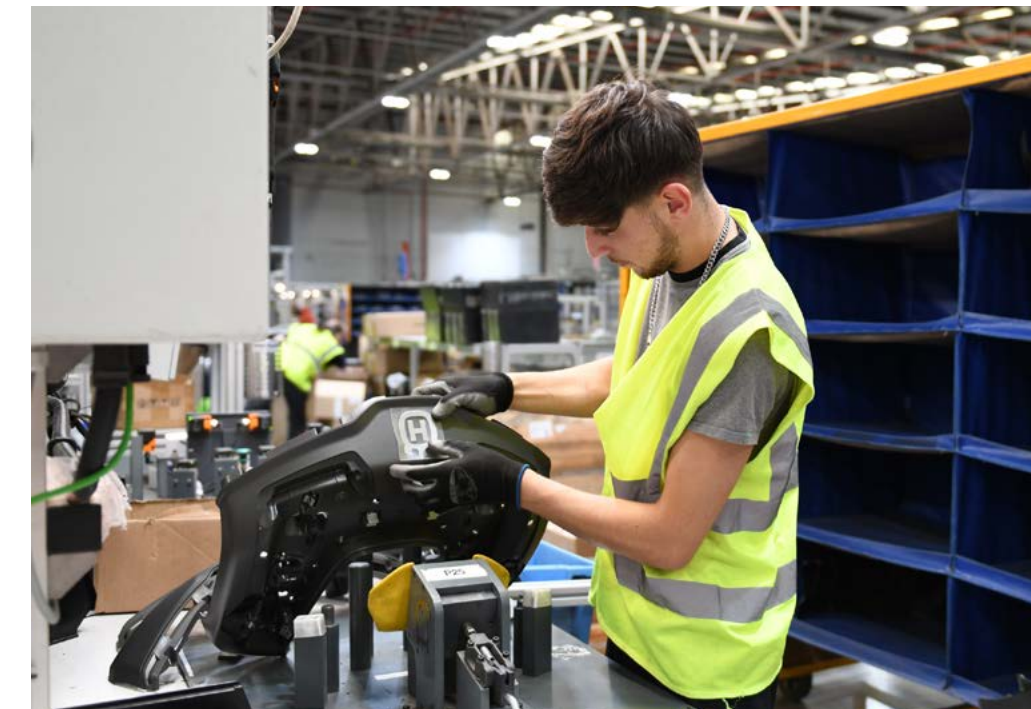
Set in motion work on the strategic project, in partnership with local authorities, to develop a **new Mayoral Development Zone (MDZ) in the centre of Newcastle and Gateshead**, which will include fully supporting significant projects along the banks of the River Tyne, including the **Forth Yards** development in Newcastle which will see the creation of **2,500 new homes, Gateshead Quays** and several other key major sites clearly identified in the North East Devolution Deal, Trailblazer Deal and Investment Prospectus as strategically important to North East England.

Cabinet also approved the **Sunderland MDZ**, the Creative Growth Zone, accelerating regeneration and investment to grow the city's creative economy. The zone will support delivery of **Crown Works Phase 1**, bringing forward a flagship screen production facility and laying the foundations for long term, creative led, growth.

Further, Cabinet has additionally endorsed the **Durham MDZ**, enabling the next phase of regeneration and investment in the city. Phase 1 will focus on the **Durham Innovation District at Aykley Heads**, unlocking development to support long-term economic growth.

The **North East Growth Hub** engaged directly with over **2,500 businesses**, providing over **1,000 with one-to-one guidance** from a Business Growth Adviser, to enable access to business support and finance options for sustainability and growth. Digital content enabled access to self-service support, resulting in over **23,500 referrals** to business support providers.

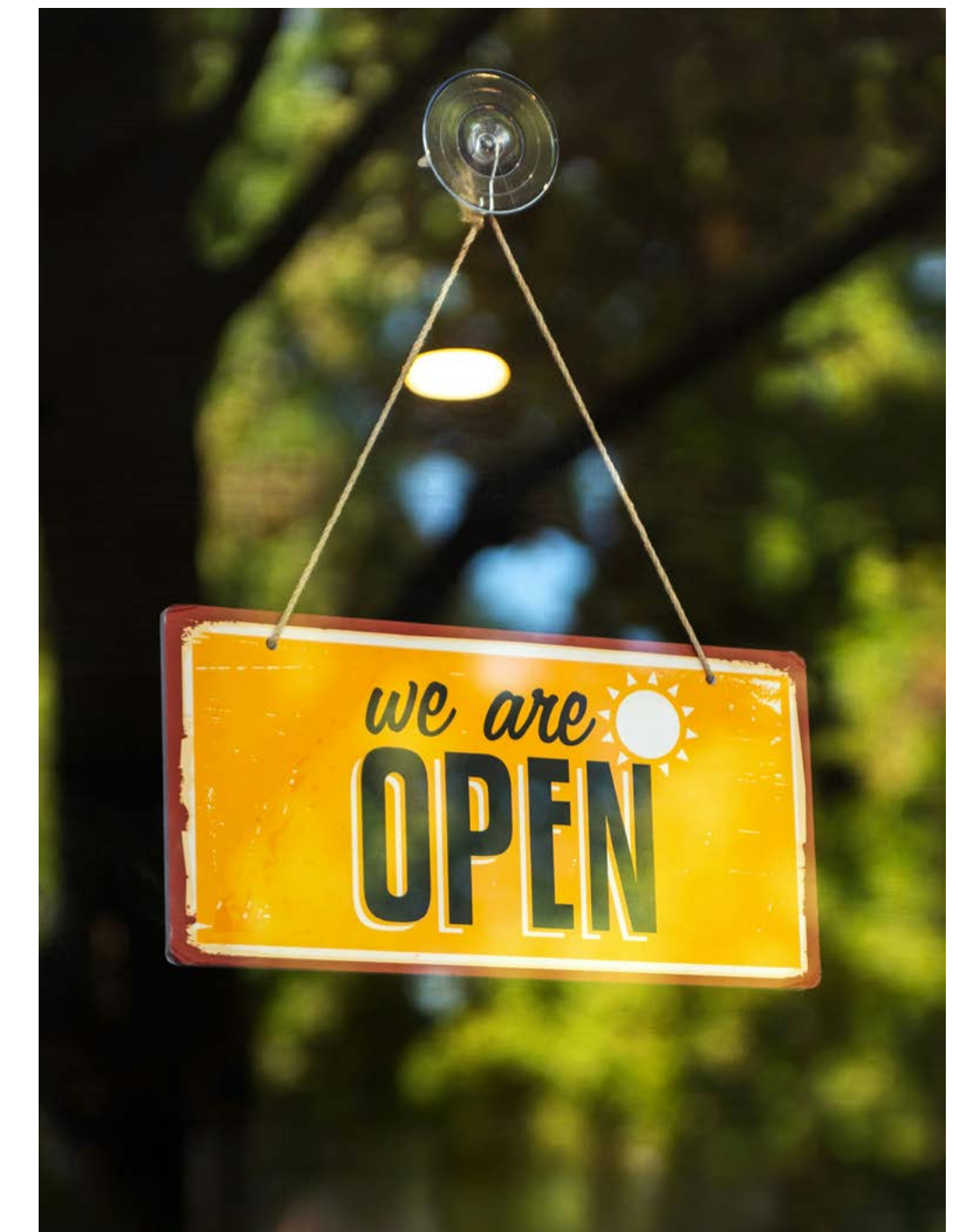
Our **business support programme** helped to **create over 430 jobs** in the region and **safeguard a further 400 jobs** in 2025/26. Over 260 enterprises improved their productivity because of the support they received from the programme.



127 manufacturing businesses engaged with our Made Smarter Adoption programme in 2025/26. Of those businesses, 106 completed digital roadmaps to help them identify new technologies to help them grow and a plan for implementing them. 65 businesses accessed £623k of funding to introduce implement their digital roadmaps, this was matched with £1.45m of private investment.

Provided over **£1.5m of repayable loans to 16 organisations** through the pilot phase of the **Flexible Social Finance Fund**, supporting the **creation of 21 jobs** and the creation or safeguarding of five community spaces across the North East. In February 2026, we launched round two of the Fund, making a **further £1.5m of loans available**.

Launched **SHINE**, our new employer accreditation scheme that recognises organisations which lead with fairness, opportunity and respect, supporting them to adopt and embed better employment practices. **Over 400** employers are signed-up to SHINE, with **250+ accredited**. Altogether, SHINE accredited businesses and subscribers represent nearly **122,000 employees** across the region.



😊 Home to a growing and vibrant economy for all

2026-28 Short-term pledges

The refreshed North East MSA Corporate Plan (2026-2030) sets out the Mayor's key short-term commitments to drive delivery of our five missions and improve people's lives. Delivery is already underway across all pledges to make the home to a growing and vibrant economy for all, with much more progress to come over the next two years.



Short-term pledge

What we've achieved and what's to come

Create jobs and support the hospitality industry by doubling the size of the visitor economy over the next decade

Funded the development of **Experience North East England**, a new regional tourism body responsible for regional visitor economy delivery and local visitor economy services for the whole of the North East.

Over the next two years, we will launch and embed a **long-term regional events strategy** to drive, sustained growth in the visitor economy, and support the delivery of major upcoming events, including UEFA Euro 2028 fixtures in Newcastle.

Deliver a programme of events that raises the region's profile and creates opportunities for residents and communities

We have already delivered the **£2.62m Early Priority Events Programme**, which supported a wide range of cultural and community events across local authority areas. This work strengthened the region's capability in event delivery and promotion, from major festivals to locally led activities that encouraged community participation, skills development and local economic benefit.

Over the next two years, we will **scale up this progress** through a new events and participation investment plan. This will build on what has worked well so far, while continuing to invest in both **major international events** and **grassroots community events**.

Continue to support job creation in the creative industries

We have developed our **Culture, Creative Industries and Sport Framework**, which sets a clear strategic direction for growing the region's creative economy, strengthening cultural infrastructure, and widening access to culture and sport for residents and communities. The framework brings together investment, partnerships and major events to support job creation, skills development and inclusive, place-based growth across the North East.

Following further consultation with partners and stakeholders, the framework will be finalised in the summer.

Over the next two years, we will deliver **£25m of programmes** to accelerate the growth of our creative industries. This investment will turbocharge our screen, music, writing and publishing sectors; expand access to finance for creative businesses; support freelancers; and foster innovation across the region.

Home to a growing and vibrant economy for all

Short-term pledge

What we've achieved and what's to come

Support grass roots music and creative venues through the introduction of a Small Venues Fund

The **Mayor's Small Venues Fund** will launch in **July 2026** to support grassroots music and creative venues, helping them become more sustainable and providing space for the next generation of local talent to grow. This builds on wider investment in the region's music ecosystem, including the Northern Music Export Office and support for the regional Music Industry Cluster.

Over the next two years, we will provide targeted funding to grassroots venues to strengthen their resilience and capacity, develop stronger local music pipelines from grassroots to international export, and help venues access wider business support, finance and skills provision.

Increase business creation and growth in the region, including the number of innovative firms and those with the potential to scale up or export

To unlock the **£30m Local Innovation Partnerships Fund**, we have been working in partnership with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and regional stakeholders on the development of a project portfolio focusing on materials innovation; health innovation and space technologies.

As part of our wider work on innovation, we have been collaborating with Innovate UK on the development of a joint **North East Innovation Action Plan**. This work will continue to develop, informed by the recent publication of Innovate UK's new strategy and the development of the North East Local Innovation Partnership Fund in partnership with UKRI.

We will support businesses to start, grow and scale across the North East through a streamlined business support service

In partnership with Local Authorities, the business community and providers we are developing a **new £30m+ Business Support Framework** to create a single, regionally coordinated offer to businesses across the North East. The framework will align support with the Local Growth Plan and ensure business leaders across the region can **access high-quality support to start, grow and scale**, driving productivity, innovation and inclusive growth.

Over the next 12 months, the North East Growth Hub will maintain delivery performance, supporting business owners to navigate and access business support, finance and funding as we transition to a new business support framework.

Use the SHINE programme to promote and celebrate exemplary workplaces and employment practices in our region

SHINE is on track to receive **1,000 sign-ups by November 2027**.

The first **Shining Bright conference**, in partnership with Ward Hadaway, will take place in June 2026, bringing together employers, leaders and changemakers from across the North East to explore what it takes to build thriving workplaces.

Home to a growing and vibrant economy for all

Short-term pledge

What we've achieved and what's to come

Accelerate regeneration of our towns and cities through Mayoral Development Zones in Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland, and unlock proposals across Durham City

Following the approval of the **Newcastle Gateshead MDZ**, an expert team of architects, property and commercial advisers, transport and movement experts and an award winning community engagement team has been commissioned, via a public tender exercise, to deliver the associated '**Strategic Regeneration Framework**' for the MDZ. This will help define what it is and what it does in the years to come.

Cabinet's recent endorsement of the **Durham MDZ** marks a transformative step for Durham City - this ambitious initiative kicks off with the eagerly anticipated launch of Phase 1 in the Durham Innovation District at Aykley Heads, paving the way for a thriving community where creativity and progress come together to redefine Durham for generations to come.

Cabinet approved the **Sunderland MDZ** and Creative Growth Zone to drive investment and regeneration, supporting Crown Works Phase 1 and a flagship screen production facility to enable long-term creative-led growth, which was backed by £25m investment.

Attract inward investment to large scale capital development across the region through the Investment Prospectus

To complement our **Investment Prospectus**, we will shortly publish our **North East AI Growth Zone Prospectus**, setting out the physical infrastructure offer required to deploy advanced digital technologies, opportunities for investors and innovators and how the benefits of AI will be extended across businesses, communities and public services.

We will continue to work with and support **investor engagement** to translate interest into confirmed projects.

Case study: Supporting the North East as a centre for culture and creativity

In 2025, the Mercury Prize came to Newcastle, marking the first time in the award's history that it had been hosted outside London. Alongside the main awards show at Utilita Arena Newcastle, a regional fringe programme helped spread the benefits of the event far beyond the city centre, into communities across the North East.

North East MSA provided £250,000 to help bring the Mercury Prize to Newcastle, alongside a programme of community engagement events across the region. That investment supported 26 fringe events spanning all of our seven Local Authority areas, creating opportunities for more people to take part, experience live music close to home, and connect with the wider cultural moment created by the Prize.

The Mercury Prize and Fringe brought almost 8,000 visitors to the North East to attend either the main awards show or one of the fringe performances. The **total economic and social impact was estimated at £1,432,656**. Visitors spent £874,724 in the North East, helping support the equivalent of 13 jobs and contributing **£552,868 in economic value** to the regional economy.

Hosting the Mercury Prize gave the North East a major national and international platform. The event helped reinforce the region's growing status as a music and cultural destination, while the wider programme created opportunities for young people and local talent to benefit directly. Reporting after the event also highlighted the reach of the fringe activity across the region, the role it played in showcasing local creatives, and the way it helped turn a single awards ceremony into a broader programme of cultural participation and regional pride.

Targeted investment in a high-profile cultural event can deliver both economic returns and wider social value. By helping to bring the Mercury Prize to Newcastle and supporting a fringe programme across all seven local authority areas, North East MSA boosted visitor spend, supported jobs, and helped ensure the benefits of a major national event were felt across the whole region.

As a result, the Mercury Prize is returning to Newcastle in 2026.



Case study: Supporting businesses to improve job quality and workforce wellbeing (SHINE)

SHINE is the North East MSA's employer accreditation scheme, recognising organisations that place fairness, opportunity and respect at the heart of work. With **400 businesses** signed up, representing **122,000 employees** across the region, the scheme is helping to embed responsible employment practices at scale. As part of the MSA's wider ambition to make the North East the home of real opportunity and a growing and vibrant economy for all, and alongside initiatives such as the New Deal for North East Workers, SHINE provides a practical framework through which employers can strengthen job quality, support their workforce and contribute to inclusive growth.

Across its core themes, SHINE is supporting employers to create workplaces that are fairer, more inclusive and better equipped to respond to current labour market and business challenges. Its focus on fair work and fair pay helps reinforce the importance of secure, dignified employment, while its emphasis on employee health, safety and wellbeing supports healthier and more supportive working environments.

Through its focus on employee voice, communication and representation, the scheme also encourages stronger dialogue between employers and staff, helping to build trust, improve workplace culture and ensure that employees feel listened to and valued.

SHINE also supports a broader understanding of good employment as something that combines workforce development, inclusion, social responsibility and long-term sustainability. By encouraging employers to invest in skills, progression and opportunity for all, the scheme helps businesses build resilience and improve retention while widening access to good work. Its emphasis on community impact, net zero and responsible business practice further reinforces the role that employers can play in supporting not only their own workforce, but also the wider social and economic wellbeing of the region. Taken together, these themes show that SHINE is not simply a recognition scheme, but a mechanism for driving continuous improvement in how employers support people and contribute to regional prosperity.

The impact of SHINE can also be seen in the experience of individual employers across the region. Genee Consulting, based in Gateshead, provides one example of how the framework is being used to embed sustainability, fairness and accountability within business practice. As an environmental consultancy and B Corp-certified organisation, Genee has used the accreditation to evidence its commitment to responsible employment and to strengthen its approach to community impact, environmental responsibility and good work.

This demonstrates how SHINE can support employers in different sectors and locations to align organisational values with practical action, while contributing to the MSA's wider priorities around inclusive growth, workforce development and responsible business.



Home of green energy revolution

We will grasp the opportunity that green energy presents to the North East. Not only will this transform our economy, creating thousands of jobs and reducing carbon emissions, we'll build and adopt the new technologies and solutions needed for the UK to decarbonise too. We'll ensure we're the natural choice for new industries that need access to clean energy, development land, natural resources, and a skilled workforce.

We will champion innovation, accelerate the growth of green businesses, and equip residents with the skills needed to seize the major job opportunities created by the transition to a low-carbon economy. We will lead the region's clean-energy efforts by bringing partners together and setting a clear strategic direction for the North East.

We will also protect and restore the North East's distinctive natural environment while ensuring that every resident can share in the economic and social benefits of a greener future. This transition will be shaped with - and for - the people of the region.

Delivery Achievements

Since the North East MSA was established in May 2024, we have already taken significant steps to make the North East the home of the green energy revolution:

Launched the new **£2.3m North East Warm Homes service** which will provide bespoke in-person, web and telephone advice to **over 3,000 households**, supporting 1,600 to adopt energy saving measures and 245 to undertake major home improvements to increase energy efficiency. Since launching, almost 1,000 households have been supported to take up energy efficiency measures.

Across all our warm home programmes, we have supported **3,045 households** since May 2024, of which 579 adopted small energy saving measures, and 148 installed energy saving installations.

Launched the **North East Warm Homes Taskforce** in October, convening industry leaders from across the region to support development of a regional retrofit strategy and action plan to ensure a joined-up response to tackling cold, damp housing and preparing to deliver on devolved funding from 2028 onwards.

Published the **Mayor's Plan for Green Jobs** which outlines the MSA's approach to creating **25,000 new green jobs by 2035** through medium-term investment into multiple clean energy sectors, skills programmes and transport programmes. The plan signals an intent and a direction based on current commitments. Further programmes and interventions will be required to support delivery through to 2035.

Invested **£19.5m** in a **new North East Offshore Wind Infrastructure Programme** to secure the once-in-a-generational opportunity that offshore wind provides the region in economic growth. The programme will leverage over **£195m** of investment from national investors such as **The Crown Estate, National Wealth Fund and Great British Energy**. This could contribute towards unlocking **5,000 new offshore wind-related jobs** and over **£1.5bn** of public and private investment over 5 years, contributing towards an ambition of doubling the amount of renewable energy jobs in the North East by 2035 and £3bn of private investment, as set in the Local Growth Plan.

Collaborated with partners and the Crown Estate to launch **over six gigawatts of offshore wind capacity** in the North East by **incorporating regional seabed sites into the Crown Estate's leasing round**. This move is expected to attract billions of pounds in investment and support the Mayor's Plan for Green Jobs.

Launched the **£7m North East Offshore Wind and Demonstration Programme**, a region-wide innovation support programme to help businesses bring new world-leading offshore wind technology to market, grow businesses and create green jobs.

Engaged **340 young people** across three green jobs roadshows, which promote awareness of the exciting range of green careers opportunities available across the region, delivering on the Mayor's Plan for Green Jobs. As part of our upcoming **Inspiring Green Careers Programme** there will be nine roadshows between 2026-2029.

Approved **major investments in green skills facilities**, including **£18.2m for the South Shields Marine School**, **£8.9m for the Newcastle College Energy Academy**, and **£6.3m for the Energy Central Institute in Blyth**.



Home of green energy revolution

Set in motion the **North East Ports Partnership** with a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Mayor, Port of Blyth, Port of Tyne, Port of Sunderland and Newcastle Airport. By aligning strategies and resources, the North East Ports Partnership will strengthen global connectivity, drive investment, accelerate the transition to a net zero economy, and raise the North East's profile as a world-leading hub for sustainable trade and innovation.

Developed and published the '**North East Green Energy Opportunity**' and the '**North East Ports**' brochures which set out the investment opportunities for green energy in the region to investors and supply chain.

Supported **121 SMEs and VCSEs** across Newcastle, Northumberland and North Tyneside to **save money on their energy bills** by providing energy efficiency advice, audits, and finance for the implementation of energy saving interventions, through the BEST programme. On average businesses that received a grant via the programme to install energy efficiency measures, saved over £6,700 on their annual energy bills. For every £1 of UKSPF investment, the BEST project generated an estimated £4.44 in economic value through carbon reduction alone.

Launched our **£3.95m North East Energy Accelerator** to accelerate investment and deployment of local clean energy projects in the North East. The programme will serve as a catalyst for regional economic growth, community-led benefits, and the creation of sustainable green jobs.



The **Energy for Growth Accelerator**, designed to fast-track low-carbon investment, deployed **£1.15m** in grants and leveraged a further **£1.19m in match funding**. This supported **32 diverse projects**, including heat networks, solar carports, geothermal schemes and strategic master planning. Although the programme — which concluded in March 2025 — primarily supported local authorities, it also backed several community-led initiatives. Five of these community buildings are now seeking additional investment through the **NE Carbon and Nature Marketplace**.

Supported 24 schools across Northumberland and Sunderland to install **Solar PV panels**, through £700,000 from the Mayor's Renewables Fund. Collectively the solar panels are estimated to **save an estimated £100,000 a year** in energy bills for the schools. The energy saved will be the equivalent to around 85 tonnes of CO₂ per year.

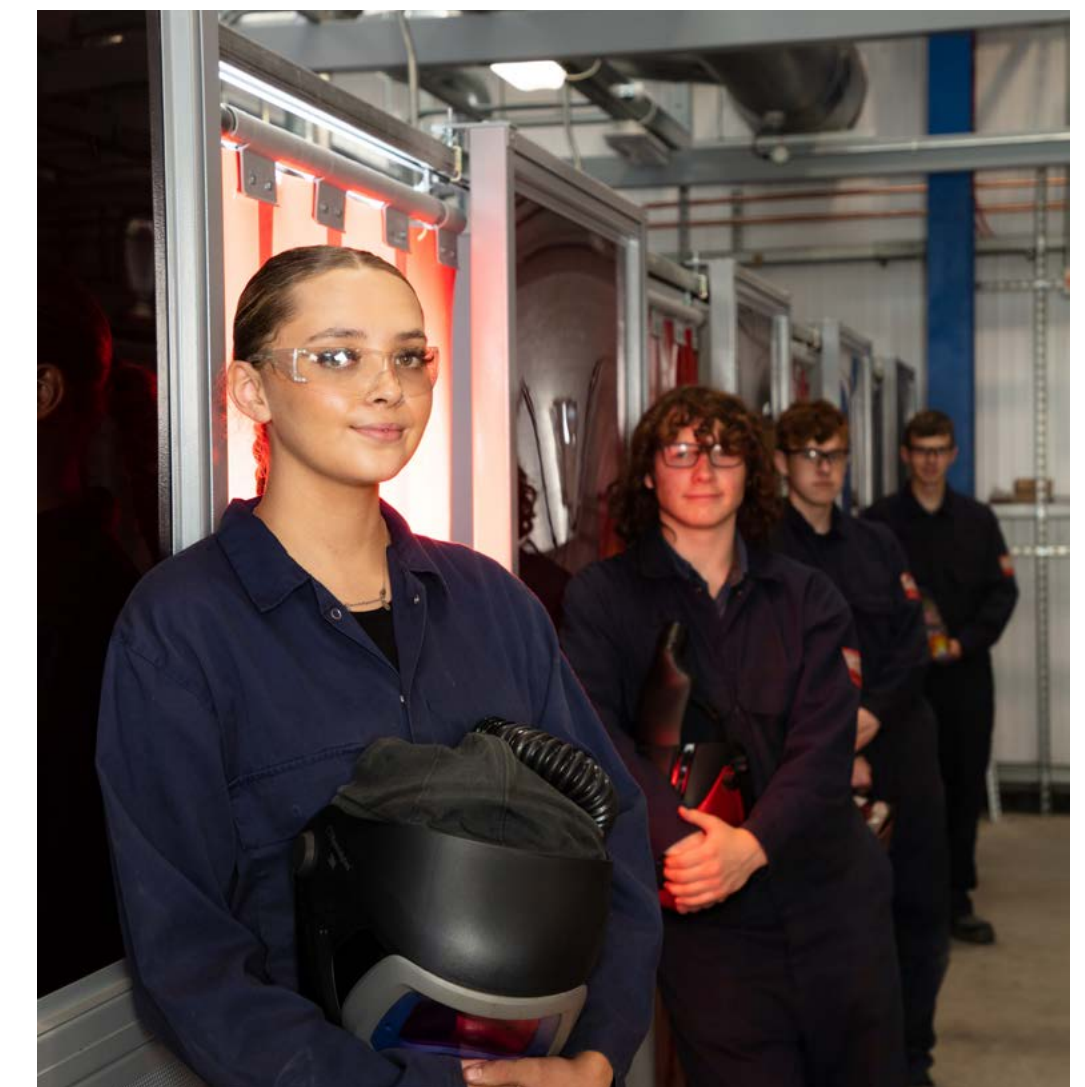
The **Green New Deal Fund**, an investment fund to provide finance to SMEs and the public sector to reduce carbon emissions, create green jobs and develop skills in the region has committed **£3.7m of funding to SMEs, charities and public sector** entities in the region, unlocking more than £44m in additional investment, creating 180 jobs and saving 1,308 tonnes of CO₂ per year.

Co-developed the **North of Tyne Local Nature Recovery Strategy** with partners was published in April 2026 following a statutory consultation process. The **Durham, and South of Tyne and Wear Local Nature Recovery Strategies** are due to be published in the summer.

Launched The **North East Carbon and Nature Marketplace** which has been championed by local and national colleagues as an outstanding example of public sector leadership to **drive private finance into nature recovery and decarbonisation projects**. Following the launch, 59 listings have been made including Habitat Banks selling Biodiversity Units, organisations selling carbon credits, and nature recovery projects, seeking a combined total of over £42m (including the £30m Rothbury Estate purchase). Much of this funding delivers on significant community benefits in tandem with nature and decarbonisation efforts.

Delivered the **Invest North East: Energy & Innovation Summit** in January 2026 which showcased the North East as a global hub for clean energy, green manufacturing, and net zero investment.

Awarded four businesses **£600,000** in funding to support the development of innovative technologies and services that have the potential to increase UK content in the offshore renewable energy supply chain. This investment was delivered through the **Technology, Innovation and Green Growth for Offshore Renewables (TIGGOR)** programme, bringing total programme funding awarded to businesses to **£4.2m**, leveraging more than **£3m** in match funding.



Home of green energy revolution

Official opening of the Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Catapult's new **Technology Development Centre** in October 2025, following **£2m** investment, which will create new, good quality green jobs in the North East.

In partnership with the ORE Catapult, announced a **£2.1m** investment in the **UK's first offshore wind cable testing rig in Blyth**.

Almost 100 new zero-emission buses have now been delivered to operators across the region, supporting the Mayor's ambition for every bus in the North East to be zero-emission within the next decade. These vehicles are already operating on routes across the region. An additional **£3.6 million** has been secured from Government to fund **18 more zero-emission buses**, which will serve passengers in **North Tyneside**.

Funded the installation of **32 new EV charge-points** across the region which is an important step towards making the North East the greenest transport destination in the country.

Secured a **£15.8m** award following a successful bid for Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure funding that will eventually see more than **1,000 charge points installed by 2030**.

Successfully obtained **£1.2m** grant funding for the installation of approximately **1,300 EV Pavement Channels**.

Invested **£540,000** to install a large-scale solar energy system in South Tyneside which will deliver carbon savings of **324 tonnes over the 25 year lifespan**.

Secured **£50m** of funding for the **Supplier Readiness Transformation Programme** which will support the development of an effective, resilient electric vehicle (EV) cluster in the North East. The programme is now live and open to businesses across the region.



Home of green energy revolution

2026-28 Short-term pledges

The refreshed North East MSA Corporate Plan (2026-2030) sets out the Mayor's key short-term commitments to drive delivery of our five missions and improve people's lives. Delivery is already underway across all pledges to make the North East the home of the green energy revolution, with much more progress to come over the next two years.



Short-term pledge

What we've achieved and what's to come

Introduce the Mayor's new delivery plan for green jobs, creating opportunities in offshore wind and other areas where the North East leads the country

The **Mayor's Delivery Plan for Green Jobs** marks a bold new chapter for the North East, setting out how the region will lead the UK's green energy revolution and **double the number of green jobs to 50,000 by 2035**.

The plan builds on the region's existing strengths and the major opportunities ahead, with a focus on bringing more good, secure jobs to local people. Backed by immediate action and investment in **clean energy, skills, innovation and infrastructure**, it will unlock thousands of high-quality jobs and deliver a **fair, just transition** that puts communities at the heart of green growth.

To complement the projects and programmes already in delivery, we are launching three new initiatives: North East Offshore Wind Infrastructure Programme; SME Energy Savings Programme; Inspiring Green Careers.

Deliver the new Energy Academy in Wallsend as part of our Green Energy Super Academy

£8.9m has been approved to expand the Newcastle College Energy Academy in Wallsend, creating a **new Energy Campus** at the heart of the North East's green energy economy. The expanded Academy will more than double training capacity, equipping over **1,000 learners a year** with the skills needed for high value jobs in offshore wind and renewable energy, and strengthening the region's pipeline of green talent.

We are also progressing the work to deliver a Mayor's Green Energy Super Academy platform (as part of Inspiring Green Careers programme), bringing together our green energy skills institutes and centres under a **North East Green Jobs offer**.

Support families with the cost of living by tackling fuel poverty through the roll out of a major retrofit programme that will make North East homes warmer, greener and cheaper to run.

The **North East Warm Homes service** is now supporting families across the region to tackle fuel poverty and is on track to assist **over 3,000 households**. This includes enabling around **1,600 families** to install energy-saving measures and delivering **245 major retrofit installations**, providing immediate cost-of-living relief while laying the foundations for large-scale retrofit in the years ahead.

Work is underway to launch both a **low-interest retrofit loan** and a solar **collective-buying scheme** to complement the Warm Homes advice service. These initiatives will help drive down installation costs for self-funding households and provide affordable finance where upfront cost is the main barrier. Both schemes are expected to launch in **Summer 2026**.

Development of a **regional retrofit strategy** is also progressing, supported by the **Warm Homes Taskforce**, to ensure the region is ready to deliver on devolved retrofit funding from **2028 onwards**.

Home of green energy revolution

Short-term pledge

What we've achieved and what's to come

Continue to create and support jobs in the advanced manufacturing sector, including the electric vehicle industry

The **£50m Supplier Readiness Transformation Programme** will support the region's advanced manufacturing supply chain as it transitions towards electrification. The programme launched in April 2026, and we are working with key sector partners including the North East Automotive Alliance, MADE NE and the Advanced Propulsion Centre to raise awareness and support companies who wish to apply for funding to help us award **£1.2m** of capital grant funding by the end of March 2027.

Increase access to greener transport options across the region

Almost **100 new zero-emission buses** have been delivered to operators across the region and £3.6m additional funding has been secured from Government to deliver a further 18 new zero-emission buses. We're working on a detailed transition plan for every bus in the region to be zero-emission.

We're set to install at least **500 more EV charging points** by the end of this mayoral term and 250 pavement channels for people without off-street parking to install an EV charging point at their home.



Case study: Supporting families with rising energy costs

North East Warm Homes helps residents reduce energy bills, improve home comfort and access support to make their homes warmer and healthier. Delivered on behalf of the North East MSA by Energy Saving Trust, with in-person support from Groundwork North East and Cumbria, the programme offers advice, home visits and retrofit support across the seven local authority areas.

One household in West Newcastle shows why this support matters. The family was living with significant energy debt, poor housing conditions and the legacy of faulty insulation work, all of which were adding to financial pressure and creating serious risks for health and wellbeing. With children in the home affected by asthma and the wider household dealing with ill health and hardship, the combination of cold home issues, damp and mould had become especially difficult to manage.

North East Warm Homes stepped in with tailored support to help the resident begin to stabilise the situation. Advisers referred the household to council Money Matters services, helping to address more than £6,000 of energy debt and reduce immediate financial stress. They also supported access to the Warm Homes: Local Grant and the steps needed to explore future energy-efficiency improvements.

Alongside this, advisers helped the household navigate a complicated and frustrating process involving EPC requirements, faulty previous installation work and multiple external organisations. Support included working with Trustmark, PAS Complaints, insurers and installers to pursue resolution, compensation and a route back towards future grant eligibility. This kind of hands-on advocacy is a key part of the service, which combines digital, phone and in-person support to help residents make progress where they might otherwise struggle to act alone.

Although this is one family's story, it reflects a wider challenge across the North East, where fuel poverty and poor housing continue to affect many residents, showing the value of a joined-up service that helps people access advice, funding and practical support.

This case shows the importance of sustained support for households facing complex barriers, especially where poor-quality retrofit work has already caused harm. It also shows how North East Warm Homes supports the North East MSA's ambition for lower bills, healthier homes and a fairer transition to cleaner energy by combining trusted advice with practical follow-up.





A welcoming home to global trade

The North East has strong international links and we will build on our global reputation to maximise new opportunities. We will secure more inward investment and re-investment, helping increase our share of global trade, including by maintaining a focus on our manufacturing and pharmaceutical strengths, together with newer opportunities across energy, defence, space, education, digital, finance and the cultural sectors.

We will position the region to attract financial and business investment, whilst refreshing our international inward investment and visitor capabilities. This will be seen in our spending on infrastructure, and the development of key sites to unlock private finance.

Delivery Achievements

Since the North East MSA was established in May 2024, we have already taken significant steps to make the North East a welcoming home to global trade:

Secured an **AI Growth Zone**, with sites in Northumberland and North Tyneside, which is expected to create more than **5,000 new jobs** and bring **£30 billion investment** to the region as we become a hub for AI skills, adoption and innovation.

Held the region's first **Mayoral trade visit to Japan** in 2025.

Signed **two international agreements** that bring together Hitachi's global expertise in mobility and energy with the region's ambitions, along with the Port of Tyne's growing role as a clean energy and low-carbon logistics hub. The agreements will boost the bus network, create new green jobs, and accelerate the North East's transition to net zero.

Worked closely with the Office for Investment, the Crown Estates, and institutional investors to develop **new propositions for investment across our priority sectors**, including clean energy, life sciences, space and defence.

Invested **£70m** via the **North East Fund** to provide opportunities for North East small businesses and entrepreneurs to access investment. The Fund aims to leverage private sector co-investment of up to **£170m** to support at least 470 innovative business and create **2,300 new jobs** over the next 15 years, helping to drive economic growth and opportunity in every corner of the North East. Since its launch, 21 businesses have received investment, equating to **£6.7m**.

Increased the North East's global visibility as a competitive investment location through a programme of **targeted international outreach activity**, delivered in partnership with local authorities, ports, cluster organisations and national agencies.

Alongside partners, promoted the North East's offshore wind, port and supply-chain strengths, supporting inward investment and supply-chain localisation opportunities at **Wind Energy Hamburg**.

Supported North East companies and stakeholders to engage with commercial opportunities and policymakers, reinforcing the region's position as a leading location for electrification, decarbonised transport and clean technology at **Cenex Expo**.



Participated in the **World Health Expo** alongside other northern Mayoral Strategic Authorities, raising the profile of the North East's life sciences, health innovation and clinical research assets to international investors and partners.

In partnership with **CyberNorth**, enabled North East cyber security companies to expand into key overseas markets, including through engagement linked to Black Hat industry event in Riyadh, strengthening international market access and business visibility.

Supported representation of **Space North East England** at the Bremen Space Conference, developing international partnerships and reinforcing the region's growing space and downstream applications ecosystem.

A welcoming home to global trade

2026-28 Short-term pledges

The refreshed North East MSA Corporate Plan (2026–2030) sets out the Mayor’s key short-term commitments to drive delivery of our five missions and improve people’s lives. Delivery is already underway across all pledges to make the North East a welcoming home to global trade, with much more progress to come over the next two years.



Short-term pledge

What we’ve achieved and what’s to come

Continue to target, attract and secure investment into the North East that creates good quality jobs in our key sectors

We delivered a **single, region-wide investment service**, providing end-to-end support for inbound projects across **clean energy, advanced manufacturing, life sciences, digital and space**. This integrated approach ensured investors received coordinated assistance from **site selection** through to **partnerships, funding and skills**.

We strengthened the North East’s **global profile** through targeted international outreach with local authorities, ports, clusters and national agencies. Working closely with the **Office for Investment (OFI)** and UK overseas posts, we positioned the region within national investment propositions and managed a strong pipeline of live investor leads.

Looking ahead, we will continue to work with **OFI and overseas posts** to convert investor interest into projects, expand trade support for North East firms, and sharpen our sector propositions — particularly in **clean energy, life sciences and advanced manufacturing**.

Create more opportunities for North East businesses through the deepening of strategic relationships with other countries.

By taking a strategic approach to **investment, trade and internationalisation**, we are positioning the North East to compete globally, deepen international partnerships and create more opportunities for local businesses to grow and export.

Building on the success of the **first Mayoral mission to Japan**, we are strengthening relationships with the **Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)** and continuing targeted outreach in priority markets.

We will further develop international trade and investment relationships that open new commercial opportunities, including through participation in the **Great North Mayoral Mission to India in autumn 2026**, focused on advanced manufacturing strengths such as clean energy, electrification, semiconductors and pharmaceutical manufacturing. This delegation will support tailored market access and engagement in one of the world’s fastest-growing economies.

We will also build on the Mayor’s successful mission to Japan by establishing a **structured programme of trade and investment activity** for the territory, deepening long-term partnerships and driving growth in key sectors including clean energy and the creative industries. This will support export opportunities, inward investment and collaboration between North East businesses and international partners.

A welcoming home to global trade



Short-term pledge

What we've achieved and what's to come

Leverage the North East AI Growth Zone to attract investment to the region.

We will publish our **AI Growth Zone prospectus** setting out how we will land the physical infrastructure needed for the deployment of advanced digital technologies and expand the benefits of AI to every business and resident in the region.

Attract new funding into the region to unlock investment and growth, including through the Mayoral Revolving Growth Fund.

To maximise investment opportunities, we continue to work with **MHCLG** to put in place the governance and decision-making mechanisms required for new funding allocations to the **Mayoral Revolving Growth Fund** and the **City Investment Fund**.

Through a refreshed **North East Investment Prospectus** and coordinated investor engagement, we will set out a clear, investable pipeline aligned to priority sectors, giving investors confidence in the scale, readiness and deliverability of opportunities across the region.

By showcasing the region at key events such as **UKREiiF**, we provide a visible, coordinated platform for targeted engagement with institutional funders, developers and partners. These activities take the North East's investment offer to market, attract new funding partners and accelerate investment into delivery.

Unlock growth in SMEs through the implementation of the new North East Fund, helping businesses access the finance needed to be successful.

Following the launch of the **Elevate, Accelerate and Aspire** funds, local roadshows were held across all seven Local Authority areas.

So far, **21 companies** have received over **£6.7m** of investment from the Funds, leveraging an additional **£2.7m** in private finance. The North East Fund will continue delivering its plan, increasing its presence across the SME community. By **March 2027**, it is expected to have supported **over 55 SMEs**, created or safeguarded **more than 170 jobs**, and invested **£15m**.

Consultation and Engagement

The North East MSA exists to serve the people of the region, and since its creation in May 2024 it has placed communities at the heart of decision-making.

Through structured consultations, targeted outreach and ongoing engagement with residents, businesses and partners, we ensure local voices shape our policies and delivery. Devolution enables decisions to be taken closer to the people they affect, and our approach reflects that principle.

Over the last two years, we have delivered a wide range of consultations and engagement activity - using in-person events, online sessions and targeted outreach - to ensure diverse perspectives inform our priorities.



Engagement Highlights:

Mayor's Local Transport Plan (Nov 2024–Jan 2025)	Over 16,000 responses gathered through online surveys and in-person events, directly shaping the final adopted plan.	Local Innovation Partnership Fund (LIPF) (from Oct 2025)	The regional Steering Group prioritised innovation clusters and supported the UKRI Readiness Check. A March 2026 workshop with UKRI engaged 30+ organisations .
Local Growth Plan (Dec 2024–Dec 2025)	More than 750 stakeholders engaged across two consultation phases. Feedback strengthened the Plan's focus on gender, digital adoption, business diversity and impact metrics.	North of Tyne Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Nov 2025–Jan 2026)	Eight-week consultation generating 644 comments , now informing programme development and funding decisions.
Regional Child Poverty Action Plan (Nov 2024–Jun 2025)	Co-produced with residents, local authorities and partners through summits, roundtables and 19 engagement sessions with families.	Growth Hub Business Outreach Survey (Dec 2025–Apr 2026)	Over 100 surveys completed, improving understanding of business needs and awareness of the Growth Hub.
Innovation Action Plan (Mar–Jun 2025)	Workshops with universities, innovation agencies and businesses shaped objectives on productivity, technology adoption and inclusive innovation.	Culture, Creative Industries & Sport Strategic Framework (from Dec 2025)	Engagement launched with a Mayor-led event attended by 50+ creatives ; advisory boards established; 100+ further participants planned .
Future Business Support (from May 2025)	Input from local authorities, delivery partners, 250+ entrepreneurs and 50 providers is guiding development of a new Business Support Framework.	Supporting Under-represented Founders (from Oct 2025)	Surveys, interviews and group sessions are informing future support and widening participation.

Consultation and Engagement

Mayor Meets

Mayor Meets is the Mayor's flagship public engagement programme, combining in-person community events with **BBC Radio Newcastle** phone-ins to ensure residents can ask questions in accessible ways.



7 in-person events

delivered across the region, typically engaging **30-40 residents** per session. Insights have shaped work on transport, cost of living, safety and access to opportunities.



8 radio phone-ins

with Matt Bailey have reached large regional audiences and informed priorities, particularly around transport, skills and cost of living.

Ongoing commitment to engagement

Meaningful engagement remains central to our work. Following the conclusion of the audit, we will build on Mayor Meets by delivering a **region-wide consultation on bringing buses back under public control**, using events, targeted meetings and outreach to ensure residents' voices continue to shape decision-making.



Research and Evaluation

The North East MSA is an evidence-based organisation. We use research, evaluation and insight to understand what is working, for whom and why - and to identify where we need to adapt.

This evidence base enables us to **capture and synthesise learning across the organisation**, informing ongoing delivery, the design of new projects and programmes, and longer-term strategy and policy development.

Our **Evaluation Strategy** guides our approach by setting the principles and expectations for using evidence in decision-making, accountability and learning, supported by an Action Plan that strengthens capability, governance and tools across the organisation.

This section provides an overview of some of our most significant research and evaluation activity over the last two years:



Tackling Child Poverty

Since May 2024, the North East MSA has made **tackling child poverty** a core priority, launching the **North East Child Poverty Action Plan** and delivering the **Child Poverty Prevention Programme (2024/25)** across four areas: schools, welfare and income maximisation, employers and early years.

Independent evaluation shows that delivering support through **trusted local settings** - especially schools and early-years services - reduced stigma, improved access and enabled earlier help for families who would not otherwise have engaged. Families reported **reduced financial stress, improved wellbeing and greater confidence** to seek support. Schools increased their capacity to help families, and employers introduced changes that improved staff wellbeing, engagement and retention.

Evidence points to emerging system-level change, including:

- **A shift to prevention** through earlier, more coordinated action across schools, employers and early-years services.
- **Stronger local support systems**, with schools and early-years settings acting as trusted front doors into wider services.
- **Improved household resilience** through embedded welfare and cost-of-living support.
- **More inclusive labour-market practices**, with employers beginning to address in-work poverty.
- **Foundations for long-term change**, with learning informing regional policy and future investment.

The **Child Poverty Evaluation Framework** provides a clear, outcomes focused way to track progress on the Child Poverty Action Plan, combining population and programme level evidence to support accountability, learning and investment decisions, and to scale effective preventative approaches that reduce child poverty and its long-term impacts.

Research and Evaluation



Tackling Economic Inactivity

An independent evaluation of the **North East EI Trailblazer** shows strong early progress in engaging economically inactive residents with complex health and social barriers, supported by relationship-based keyworker models, hyper-local delivery and flexible, person-centred support. The £10m Department for Work and Pensions -funded programme is already improving confidence, wellbeing, routine and re-engagement with services, with employment emerging as a later-stage outcome, and is beginning to strengthen coordination across local employment support systems. The evaluation also identifies challenges - including compressed timescales, compliance and monitoring pressures, and funding uncertainty for trusted providers - which will inform improvements in year two. The North East MSA will use these findings to refine delivery, shape future commissioning and contribute robust local evidence to the national evaluation of health-related economic inactivity.



Regenerative Visitor Economy

Contributing to the **Home of Real Opportunity** and **Home of the Green Energy Revolution** missions, the North East MSA and Destination North East England (DNEE) have developed the **Regenerative Visitor Economy Framework** to guide long-term visitor-economy growth that delivers economic, social and environmental benefits. Co-created with **200+ stakeholders**, it provides a shared vision and practical guidance for aligning strategies, investment and delivery across DNEE, Local Visitor Economy Partnerships, local authorities and partners. The Framework is built around five regenerative pathways - **decarbonise and adapt, foster thriving local businesses, invest in people, connect people and communities, and restore nature, landscapes, culture and heritage** - supported by cross-cutting enablers such as strong governance, data-led decision-making, diversified funding and inclusive skills development. It positions the North East as a leader in regenerative tourism and is already shaping regional strategy, destination planning and partnership working to ensure future growth supports good jobs, resilient communities, reduced inequalities and progress towards net zero.



Small and Medium Enterprise Support

To inform how business support is designed and prioritised across the region, the North East MSA commissioned **Support for Business Growth: Challenges and Design** (October 2025), a research project delivered with Newcastle Business School and Insights North East to build robust, locally grounded evidence on the barriers facing SMEs. Drawing on regional focus groups with entrepreneurs and comparative analysis of national policy, the study identifies key constraints - including access to finance, skills and management capacity, digital adoption, market access and a fragmented support landscape— and sets out how the current system falls short of SME needs. The findings have clear implications for the MSA, highlighting the need for more joined-up provision, flexible and demand-led support, and targeted interventions at key growth transition points, aligned with regional ambitions for inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Our people and culture

At the North East MSA, we are shaping a culture that reflects a mission led, delivery driven and forward looking organisation. As we grow, we are bringing together a skilled and diverse workforce united by a shared purpose, enabling us to deliver meaningful outcomes for people across the North East.

Two years on from being established, we now have a fully operational senior management team and employee structure that enables us to deliver on our missions with focus and momentum.

Our passionate and talented workforce is organised into five core directorates. Yet, as a mission driven MSA, our work is never confined to organisational boundaries. Colleagues collaborate across teams, united by a shared purpose, and work closely with a wide range of partners and stakeholders to create impact across the region.

Our Values:

Strive for brilliance

One team

Make it happen

Be inclusive

Drive sustainability

Economic Growth and Innovation

Guides investment in the region to boost growth, productivity whilst proactively reducing inequality.

Transport

Shapes and delivers a greener, affordable and integrated transport network that works for everyone.

Skills, Inclusion and Public Sector Reform

Builds an economy everyone can contribute to and benefit from, equipping residents with the skills and support needed for the region to thrive.

Operations

Underpins all activities of the organisation by helping set direction, communicate, manage performance, support delivery, develop our capacity, capability and culture, ensure good governance and manage reputation.

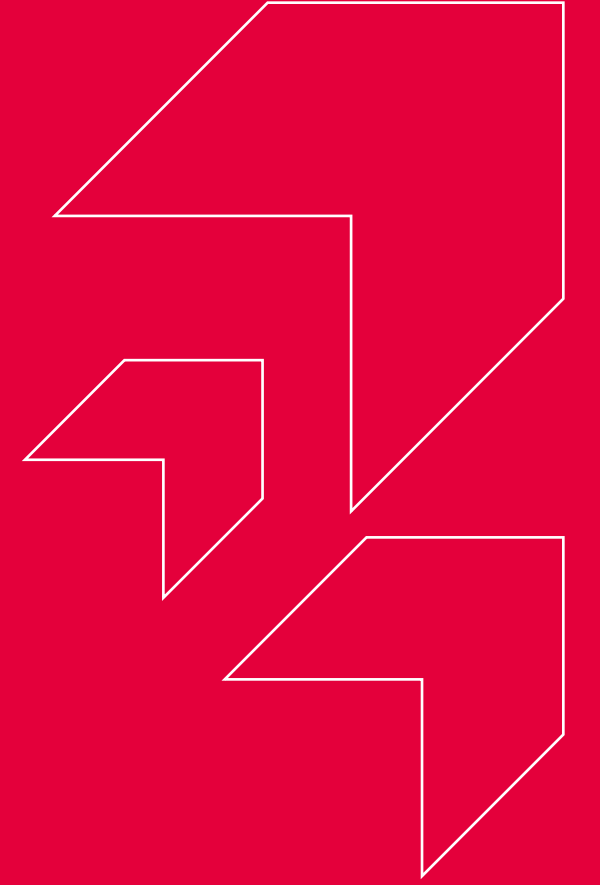
Finance and Investment

Underpins all activities of the organisation by providing strategic financial leadership and assurance, as well as managing and investing significant public funds.





Kim McGuinness
North East
Mayor



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