

# Wirral Economic Strategy 2021 - 2026



October 2021



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1

Why a New  
Economic Strategy  
for Wirral?



Wirral is at an important point in its economic history. Places throughout the UK are being challenged to come forward with ambitious plans for economic renewal as part of the government's Levelling Up agenda and Wirral provides a unique and unprecedented opportunity for positive change. The Council and its partners have embarked on a transformational regeneration programme along the 'Left Bank' of the River Mersey stretching from New Brighton to Bromborough, with a particular focus on the creation of a sustainable, waterfront urban garden community in Birkenhead, underpinned by the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and Local Plan. This presents us with a unique opportunity to use our significant regeneration programme and emerging government backed initiatives to build on our growing sector strengths, support accessible opportunities for our residents, and lever new investment to the area.

Wirral is a borough of contrasts and the Covid-19 pandemic has shone a brighter light on economic inequalities in society. The concepts of fairness and equality are more important than ever in economic planning and we want to ensure that everyone can benefit from economic growth and that disparities are significantly reduced.

A new Wirral Corporate Plan – the Wirral 2021- 2026 Plan - has been prepared and will rely on a well formulated local Economic Strategy to deliver on some of its central aims. The last Wirral Economic Growth Strategy (the 2015 Wirral Growth Plan) successfully achieved its outputs and has reached the end of its strategic lifetime. It is now time to refresh the approach and align with the scale of opportunity ahead of us.

New national and city-region policy frameworks have also evolved in recent years. Nationally the government published the Build Back Better Growth Strategy in March 2021, soon followed by the Social Mobility Commission's national recommendations. In the Liverpool City Region, the Combined Authority Corporate Plan 2021-24 was launched in July 2021 and follows documents such as the 2021-22 City Region Skills Action Plan and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transport Plan. The Combined Authority is embarking on a new Plan for Prosperity which will provide a long-term economic and place-based vision for the City Region over the next decade.

There is an opportunity right now, through the preparation of a new Economic Strategy, to make sure Wirral is fully aligned with this new policy backdrop and to provide a fresh articulation of Wirral's economic and social objectives. This strategy is intended to provide a high level framework for Wirral over a five year period. It will guide our decisions on projects and programmes and inform our detailed yearly action plans, all underpinned by regular performance review and evaluation of progress.



## How we produced this strategy?

Wirral Council commissioned Hatch to develop an Economic Strategy in consultation with officers, Elected Members and stakeholders. The strategy has been built on significant quantitative economic analysis provided by the the Wirral Intelligence Service. The work was also shaped by two types of stakeholder engagement: an online survey hosted on the Council's 'Have Your Say' portal and a series of stakeholder workshops with businesses, community representatives, skills providers, and charitable organisations in the borough. The results of both consultations have been summarised in the 'Consultation Report – Wirral Economic Development Strategy'. The feedback has been incorporated into this final strategy.

An aerial photograph of Wirral, UK, showing the Mersey River, industrial areas, and residential buildings. The image is used as a background for a title slide. The title '2 The Story of Wirral's Economy' is overlaid on the right side of the image. The number '2' is a large, white, stylized outline. The text 'The Story of Wirral's Economy' is in a white, sans-serif font. The background shows a wide river with a bridge, industrial buildings, and a residential area with a park.

# 2 The Story of Wirral's Economy



## Wirral Story of Place

The Borough of Wirral covers an area of sixty square miles and its peninsula setting, bounded by the Rivers Mersey and Dee and Irish Sea, has strongly influenced its historic and current economic role. The borough's population stands at around 320,000 and almost two thirds of the borough's population live within the predominately built-up urban areas to the east of the M53 motorway. The east of the borough is also the focus for most industry whereas many of the hamlets and villages on the Dee side of the peninsula have developed into popular and vibrant commuter settlements.

There are significant economic disparities between the east and west of the borough, and the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the depth of some of our economic challenges. Many residents face multiple barriers to gaining and sustaining employment, including a lack of opportunity, limited access to affordable transport, poor mental health, addiction and debt issues. According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, 25 per cent of the borough of Wirral falls within the 10 per cent most deprived areas of the country with the majority of these locations in the east of the borough in Birkenhead, Bidston, Seacombe and Rock Ferry.

Many of these places also provide us with the potential for large scale place-based regeneration and the opportunity to address the unacceptable levels of inequality and deprivation that currently exist. The Left Bank of the Mersey is one of the UK's largest regeneration projects capitalising on its significant brownfield land assets and town centre renewal. Over the next 15-20 years we need to fundamentally strengthen the physical fabric of the Left Bank settlements and make significant social progress through local wealth building, reducing the large disparities between east and west and triggering a step-change in the quality of life for those in the most deprived communities.

Through all of our strategies we recognise that we have an established presence in recognised growth sectors including maritime, advanced manufacturing and the visitor economy. We have also made impressive strides with the growing creative and digital industry focused in the Left Bank regeneration area. It is vital that this Economic Strategy supports these sectors to grow, innovate and to provide the right conditions for our business base to expand. We must also capitalise on our unique heritage assets and our coastal and rural locations to boost Wirral's status as a visitor destination.

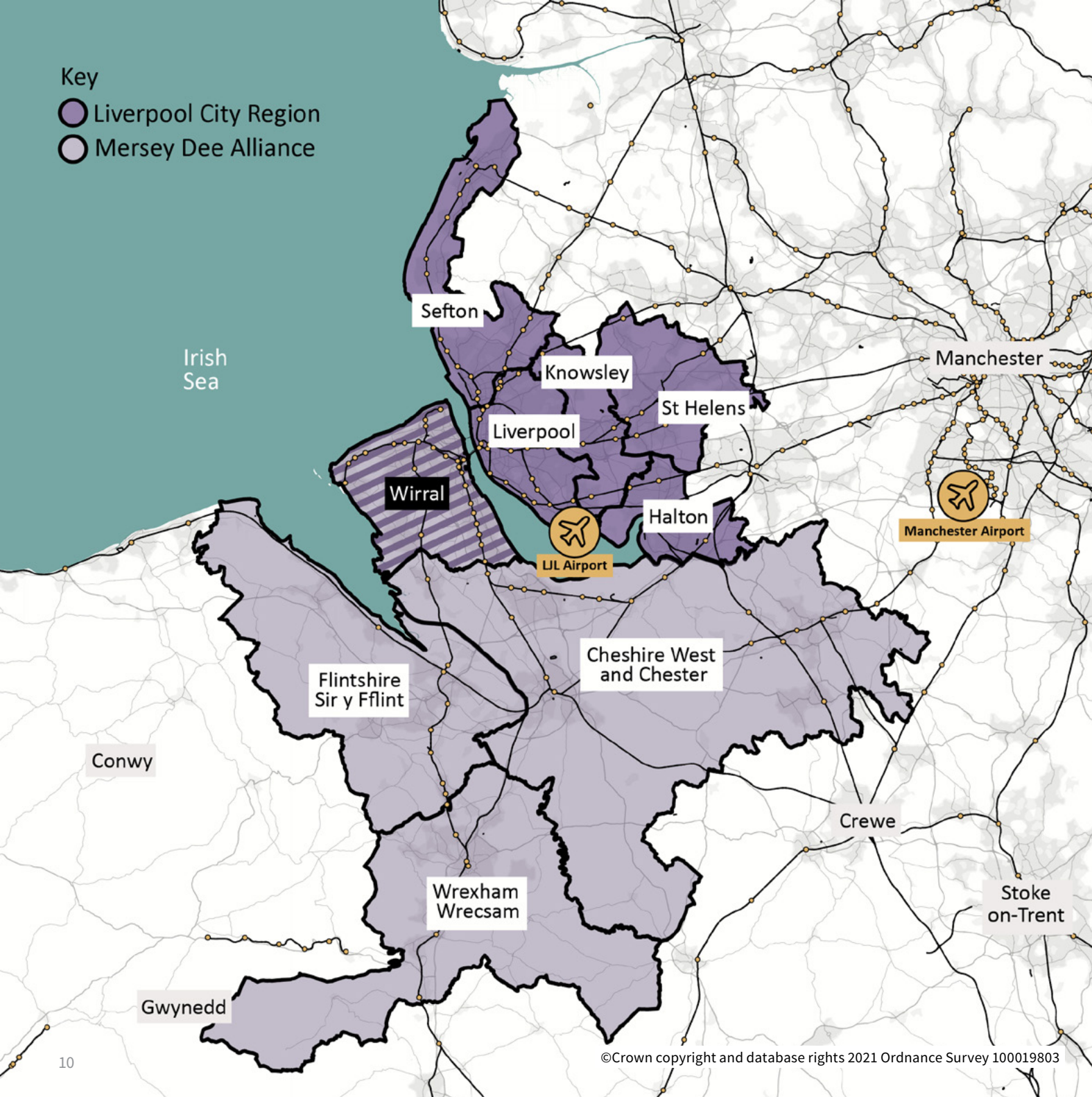
We recognise that one of the most important factors for a successful economy is an effective transport system. Wirral is a well-connected borough and forms a vital part of both the Liverpool City Region and the Mersey Dee Alliance economic area. Despite this, a lack of 'last mile' sustainable transport options acts as a barrier to employment and education. We need to ensure that local residents and businesses benefit from improved access to employment and training opportunities.

We have made a commitment with our partners to tackle climate change and this Economic Strategy identifies ways we can embed sustainability into our large-scale regeneration programme and how we can equip local residents and businesses with the skills to take up opportunities within the fast-growing low carbon economy.





Birkenhead 2040 and the Local Plan set out the spatial priorities for the borough, with a focus on the transformational proposals at Left Bank. This Economic Strategy must build upon the significant progress made throughout the previous Growth Plan period in developing partnerships in health, education and skills, as well as with investors and developers, to set out how everybody can benefit from growth through a partnership approach.

Key

-  Liverpool City Region
-  Mersey Dee Alliance



Key

-  Historic core
-  Key Left Bank industrial/ employment areas
-  Key coastal attractions
-  Concentration of industrial and residential growth - The Mersey Left Bank



# Our Strengths

# Facts

- Long established, thriving maritime sector and associated rich heritage.
- Strong quality of life provided by the range of environments on offer including town, access to a major city, countryside and coast which should help us retain talent and support active and healthy lifestyles.
- Established communities with relatively low turnover and a strong affinity with their neighbourhood.
- Strong networks between public, private and community sectors and clear ambitions to drive community wealth.
- Unique coastal, cultural and heritage assets which provide a different visitor offer to Liverpool.
- Good strategic transport network with road and rail access to both the City Region and beyond. High quality Wirral Coastal Trail.
- Significant potential brownfield land assets in the East of the borough with potential to deliver large scale residential and mixed use development.
- Continued growth of the port and maritime industry with significant economic opportunities for expansion of supply chains, logistics growth, and enhanced skills and innovation provided by the continued growth of the port industry, including the Freeport designation.
- Strong partnerships with developers and investors to deliver high quality regeneration e.g. Peel and Wirral Growth Company, and clear frameworks in place with the Liverpool City Region to drive inward investment.
- Growing cultural and creative sector, following on from the City Region Borough of Culture in 2019.
- Generally, high performing schools with strong school attainment levels. High quality and fully engaged employment and skills provider base.
- Well-engaged business base with dynamic small to medium businesses. Well established business support base with active sector networks.
- Part of a well-established City Region partnership and brand, and also a key part of the Mersey Dee Alliance.

- High value housing in parts of the borough, and active engagement in innovative new build housing to create a better environment for our residents (e.g. East Float - the 50/50 Peel L&P and Urban Splash joint venture project at Wirral Waters).

- A strong housing association sector which is committed to developing more affordable housing in the borough
- Well established partnership commitment to zero carbon. Declaration of an environment and climate emergency, with clearly defined targets for net zero.

Wirral has **480 hectares of public parks and gardens**; this is three times more than the UK average per head of population.

*Source: OS data © Crown Copyright 2017*

A recent business survey highlighted that of those companies looking to relocate, **93 per cent wanted to stay** in Wirral.

*Source: Recent Wirral Council Survey.*

The % of **people 'satisfied with their neighbourhood' (82.2%)** is higher than the average across England (79.3%).

*Source: Local Insight profile for Wirral Local Authority © OCSI 2020*

Wirral recorded **980 businesses with 10+ employees**, 5% of these were classed as high growth businesses.

*Source: ONS Business Demography*

**98% of premises in Wirral have access to superfast broadband**, 68% to ultrafast broadband.

*Source: LCR Digital Strategy.*

Wirral has **739 nationally designated entries on the National Heritage List** for England and twenty-six Council-designated Conservation Areas.

*Source: Historic England*

The Council's Brownfield Land Register contains **83 sites with potential for development**.

*Source: Wirral Brownfield Land Register.*



# Our Weaknesses

- Some communities face intense multiple deprivation, with heavy reliance on benefits (particularly health related). Stark differences in levels of poverty between the east and west of the Wirral.
- Population is ageing, with a clear need to retain young talent.
- Much of the existing office and industrial premises are low value and poor quality, making it difficult for local businesses to grow and to attract new businesses.
- Low levels of aspiration in some communities with a lack of established pathways to support higher qualifications.
- Difficulty in retaining qualified people with selective out-migration of younger, skilled people.
- Lack of concentration of high value businesses, relative to other areas, and a declining number of large businesses.
- Low levels of economic productivity, as measured through GVA, with untapped research & development potential.
- Level 3 and 4 qualifications in Wirral have recently declined and are currently lower than the national average. Structural constraints in the access to vocational qualifications.
- Lack of last mile transport connectivity, which diminishes value of otherwise good public transport connectivity and vehicle dominance.
- Lack of affordable housing in some areas (mainly in West), and a lack of housing choice in terms of type, tenure and quality in other areas (mainly East).
- Poor quality public realm in parts of the borough, which acts as a barrier to pedestrian movement and encourages anti-social behaviour.
- A shift to online retailing and an over reliance on retail in the borough have led to the decline of a number of town centres and high streets within the borough. This has been further exacerbated by the pandemic.
- Borough-level data often hides the significant disparities that exist across the borough.

**Wirral is ranked 77th most deprived district** in England, out of a total of 317. 1st=Most deprived

*Source: IMD 2019*

**20% of children are living in poverty** in Wirral compared with 17% across England.

*Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Indices of Deprivation 2019).*

Wirral is **ranked 296th out of 317 local authorities on business density** (number of businesses per head of population). 1<sup>st</sup> equals highest business density.

*Source: ONS, Business Demography*

Wirral **ranked 111th in terms of business start-ups per active businesses**, the lowest ranked area in the Liverpool City Region. Under 55% of new businesses are estimated to survive three years.

*Source: ONS, Business Demography*

**22% of people in Wirral report** having a limiting long-term illness or disability. This is above the National average of 17%.

*Source: PHE Local Health Data, MSOA level.*

There are **13,900 people in Wirral claiming Employment Support Allowance** in Wirral, of which **51% was due to poor mental health/mental illness.**

*Source: Department for Work and Pensions*

**13.5 per cent of Wirral households are in fuel poverty**, an increase of 2.6 per cent over five years

*Source: BEIS Sub-regional fuel poverty data 2019*

# Facts

# Our Opportunities

- Strong networks in place between public, private and third-party sectors to help economic development and regeneration.
- Left Bank is a significant opportunity, focused on the creation of a sustainable, waterfront urban garden community in Birkenhead.
- Significant opportunities for new growth and innovation in maritime sector to address key challenges.
- Potential for a new trailblazing delivery vehicle to support Wirral's regeneration ambitions.
- Opportunities to embed community wealth building and sustainability principles into regeneration programmes.
- Delivery of transformational funding recently secured – including Future High Streets, Town Deal, Strategic Investment Fund, Transforming Cities Fund, Levelling Up Fund, and the Affordable Homes Programme
- A key commitment to driving innovation in the borough, including through projects such as the Port City Innovation Hub and Sustainability Central.
- Growing demand for industry and office space. A shift in working practices in light of the Covid-19 pandemic could support mixed use, industrious communities through innovative live/work spaces.
- Full fibre digital network roll out across the borough will help businesses and residents access the latest technology.
- Strong commitment and opportunities to improve the energy efficiency of older housing stock and promote sustainable new builds.
- Major opportunity to grow walking and cycling – through provision of new green infrastructure, high quality public realm and changing behaviours.
- Opportunities through the Freeport Tax and Customs site at Wirral Waters and wider Freeport designation to enhance supply chain opportunities, attract investment and drive innovation.
- Opportunities to build on existing and planned visitor attractions such as Eureka! Mersey; the new transport heritage attraction in Birkenhead; and an International Battle of the Atlantic Centre at Woodside.

- Accelerating trade opportunities through building an integrated approach to exporting, including maximising opportunities arising from Brexit.
- Providing a range of high quality mixed tenure housing, focused on the areas in greatest need in the east of the borough.
- Opportunity for the co-location of public services such as health, community and sports facilities to provide an anchor for town centre regeneration.
- Diversifying town centres through the provision of a wider mix of uses such as housing and the establishment of a night-time economy
- Renewed focus from partners on health inequalities could enable stronger alignment of action to address economic and health inequalities.

Only **1% of Wirral residents cycle for travel once a week, and 1% cycle for travel more frequently** – lower than both national and city region average. There is an opportunity to improve this with new infrastructure.

*Source: DfT Participation Survey*

**Wirral had the fastest growing visitor economy** in the City Region after Liverpool – growing annually at circa 7%.

*Source: Wirral Council Monitoring*

Wirral's **employment rate is 73.9%** and we have successfully narrowed the gap with regional and national averages in recent years.

*Source: ONS, Annual Population Survey*

Birkenhead listed in the **top ten cities/towns likely to return to previous levels of activity post COVID.**

*Source: Centre for Cities High Streets Recovery Tracker.*

# Facts

Wirral scores highly on measures of levels of third sector civic and community activity. **Wirral Active and Engaged community score is 28.4**, significantly above the England average of 23.9.

*Source: Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) and Local Trust*

Just **0.5% of premises in the Wirral have Broadband speeds below the Universal Service Obligation.** The average for England is 1.8%.

*Source: Census 2011*

**48% of public open space in Wirral is maintained to Green Flag Award status.**

*Source: Wirral Council Monitoring.*

A **smaller proportion of jobs are in the most severely impacted COVID sectors** in Wirral compared to the national average – 21% versus 26%.

*Source: LCRC Analysis*

# Our Threats

- Continued Covid restrictions throughout 2021 and into 2022 and its ongoing aftershocks will impact on a number of Wirral's major sectors. Future financial support for such industries remains uncertain.
- Full impacts of Brexit on supply chain, customs, workforce and regulations are still emerging.
- Continued shift to online retailing will present an ongoing threat to town centres and high streets.
- The need for more housing across the borough puts pressure to develop housing sites rather than continue to deliver commercial premises.
- Wirral is reliant on certain prime employers and a high level of public sector employment, and some of these are under threat of relocation/reduced headcount.
- Investment opportunity competition is a threat – for example from other Freeport locations and other 'upwardly mobile' towns throughout the north of England.
- Failure to retain working age population to support economic growth ambitions.
- Climate change will increasingly impact Wirral as it will other areas. Locally we must cut CO2 by around three and a half times more each year than we have managed to do so far.
- Lasting impacts of Covid-19 pandemic could reduce the number of residents using public transport.
- Scale of regeneration opportunity in Left Bank is likely to require sustained public sector investment over several decades – a risk that recent funding successes cannot be sustained.
- Increasing labour market deregulation could impact adversely on local workers.
- Changes to the benefit system in England and Wales could force more residents into poverty.
- Increasing health related worklessness and overall poorer health of the population as a result of the pandemic.

# Facts

The share of working age population is below the Liverpool City Region or England averages. **Population aged 16 to 64 expected to decrease by 3.2%.**

*Source: Annual Population Survey.*

**60% of jobs in Wirral are in sectors likely to be moderately/severely impacted by COVID,** according to the Social Market Foundation. This % is lower than national picture, but is still a significant number.

*Source: Social market foundation*

It is predicted that the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown will lead to a **rise in unemployment from 3.8% to 10% nationally** – these trends are also evident in Wirral.

*Source: Office for Budget Responsibility*

**Only 10% of residents were involved in a decision that affected their area** in the 12-months leading to January 2021, below the England average of 14%.

*Source: (5th August 2021) Census 2011.*

In Wirral **63% of working-age residents** (120,000 people) **do not hold a degree level qualification, higher than the national average.**

**The largest employment sectors in Wirral** – health/social care/retail/wholesale – offer good employment but these sectors **have failed to grow in last 5 years.**

*Source: BRES, 2019.*

The share of retail spend accounted for by **online sales has risen by 282% in last 10 years** and will continue to grow. This represents a **threat to Wirral's town/local centres.**

*Source: Retail Sales Index time series.*

There is a **significant gap in life expectancy – equivalent to 11 years** - between east and west Wirral.

*Source: Annual Population Survey*

# 3 Vision, Objectives and Principles





The analysis in the previous section has been used to shape our proposed Vision, Objectives and Working Principles.

Our vision is to create:

**Vibrant places**, where communities and businesses thrive and people choose to live, work and visit. A rebalanced borough that stands out for its achievements on **fairness, reducing inequalities and building local wealth**. A borough that is celebrated for **delivering new and big ideas, working jointly with others and for prioritising environmental sustainability**.

There are a series of key phrases in our Vision Statement:

**Vibrant places**

It is essential that all parts of Wirral – east and west – are places where people want to live and where businesses choose to trade from and are supported to grow. We need to break down the disparities between east and west to create a network of successful places, with a strong focus on growth in the Left Bank.

**Fairness, Inequalities & Local Wealth**

No-one will be left behind in Wirral. We are committed to ensuring that wealth is more broadly distributed and that the entrenched needs of the most deprived areas are fully addressed.

**Delivering New and Big Ideas**

We want to build on our history as a place of firsts, and be a borough that seeks out new roles, new challenges and new opportunities. Wirral will be a place of innovation and new approaches.

**Working Jointly with others**

We want the new era in Wirral to be one where all parts of our economy work more extensively with partners and communities. We want to be a well networked economy that is known for joined-up working and being openminded.

**Prioritising Environmental Sustainability**

We require an all-encompassing drive on climate change. Everything we do on economic development and regeneration needs to be guided by our commitment to transition to net zero and objective to build a greener economy in Wirral.

## OBJECTIVE



### Objectives

We will focus on working with Business, Places and People in pursuit of our Vision. This tried and tested approach will ensure we are acting on all fronts to achieve our vision.

Our three central objectives are:

- Thriving Economy
- Vibrant Places
- Inclusive Economy

## Thriving Economy

Wirral has a diverse business base with a strong presence in some of the City Region's identified growth sectors – including advanced manufacturing, maritime, digital & creative, health and life sciences and the visitor economy. We will build on the strengths of our sectors and prioritise interventions that boost their innovation capacity and jobs potential. We will maximise the growth and investment opportunities provided by our public service resources and assets, significant large-scale regeneration programme and emerging distinctive opportunities such as the LCR Freeports designation.

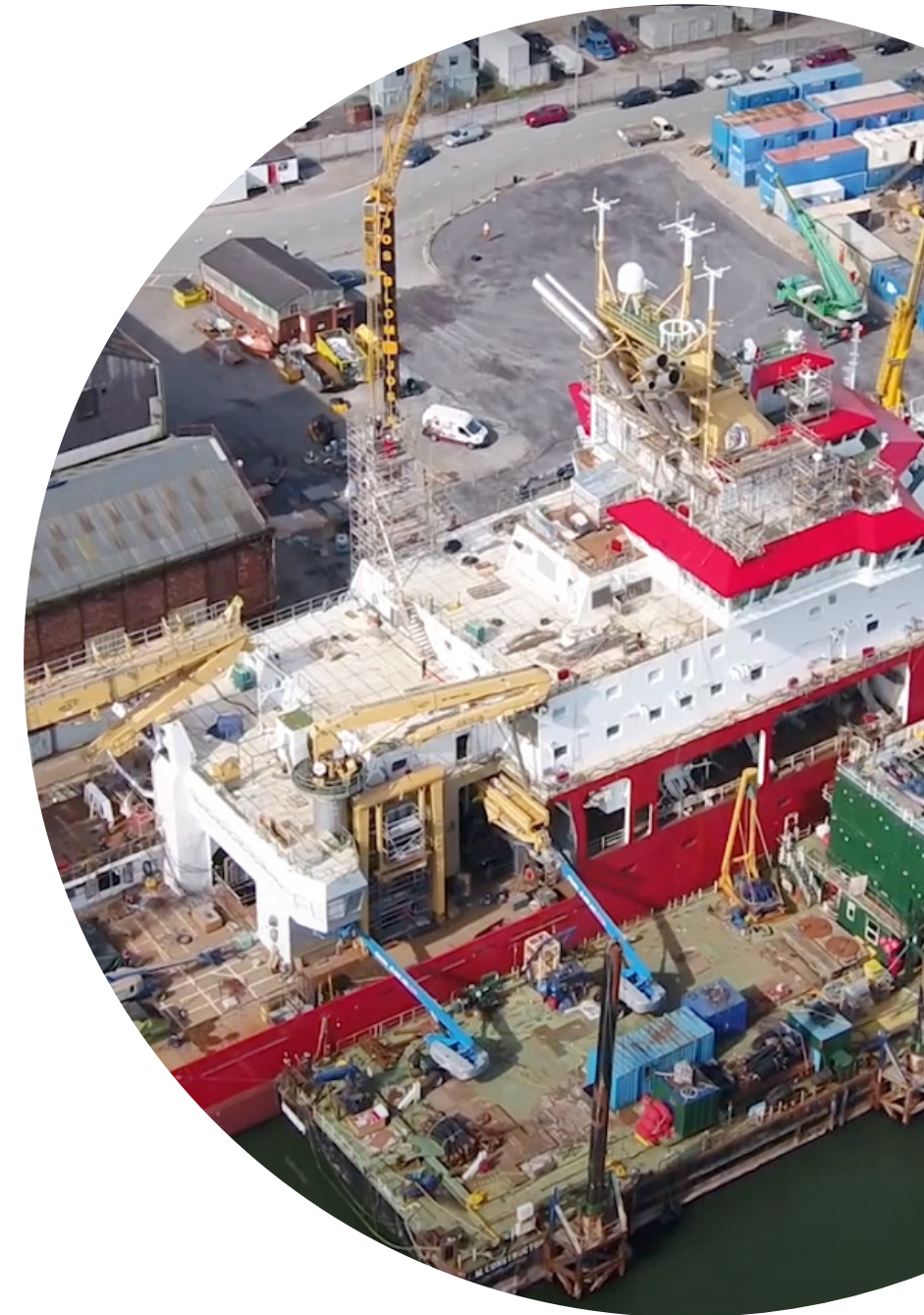
We need to provide all the necessary support to enable our local business base to grow and to increase their resilience to future market changes. This includes building greater opportunities for collaboration between our business base and the relevant support networks.

Stimulating new business start up and enterprise growth is also crucial. Although we have made great strides in supporting new independent business, particularly in the digital and creative sector through our Left Bank programme where demand remains high, we still lag behind the Liverpool City Region in business start-ups. We need to explore opportunities for more collaborative live/work facilities and managed workspaces in sustainable locations to support a growth in start-ups and to capitalise on changing work practices which have emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic.

We need to maximise inward investment opportunities to ensure that Wirral has a high quality offer for investors and businesses looking to relocate to Wirral, underpinned by our transformational Left Bank programme.

We must also ensure that the enabling factors are in place to match business needs, including appropriate skills and training, business support, access to funding and high-quality digital infrastructure.

All of the above will be done with a focus on developing and attracting business activity to support inclusive economic growth.



## OBJECTIVE



### Vibrant Places

We are developing the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and a range of supporting Neighbourhood Frameworks and detailed masterplans, to provide a robust policy framework to guide the future development of our Left Bank. The strategies will be used to inform policies in our Local Plan and will set out how we will deliver high-quality, mixed-use development in our areas most in need. We are committed to working with partners to deliver regeneration at scale and at pace, with high quality urban design and sustainability throughout.

Our network of towns, led by the primary centre of Birkenhead, is one of our greatest assets and the shift to home-working as a result of the Covid pandemic has seen a change in local spending, providing an opportunity to capitalise on 'shopping local'. Many of our centres are, however, still facing profound challenges due to the changing role of retail, the pandemic and competition from other locations.

We need to build on the existing individuality of centres, ensuring centres are a focus/hub for their communities, and extend the 'dwell time' and spend of people visiting town centres. We must also support a diversity of uses, including housing, to generate footfall and secure the long-term vitality and viability of centres.

We also need to maximise our opportunities for the visitor economy, by enhancing our cultural and heritage offer and promoting our coastal and rural assets. Wirral provides a unique visitor destination which is distinct from the city centre experience in Liverpool. Many of the Left Bank's heritage assets have not been utilised to their full potential and we need to connect these assets and create a strong visitor economy offer.

We have an active network of Registered Providers with a strong track record of delivering high quality, affordable schemes in Wirral. Our

Left Bank regeneration programme provides an opportunity to deliver a significant uplift in housing, based around innovative, high quality family homes. We must ensure that a range of housing types and tenures are delivered in Wirral, particularly focused on the Left Bank area, to help rebalance the borough's housing stock.

An effective sustainable transport network will also be crucial, to improve quality of place, drive our borough towards zero carbon, and to remove barriers to residents and businesses accessing work and training.

We want each community to be exceptionally proud of their area. We must promote social and community connectivity as the physical regeneration of places alone will not be enough to create vibrant places – the people living and working there will create the place.



## OBJECTIVE



### Inclusive Economy

The levels of inequality across Wirral are unacceptable and too many people are experiencing multiple deprivation. Many residents, particularly focused in the east of the borough, experience a range of physical and mental health issues, and are often detached from the labour market or employed in fragile jobs that offer them too little security and little prospect for progression. We will work to ensure all labour market barriers are either removed or substantially reduced.

We want to narrow the gap between those living in east and west Wirral. Nothing less than a multi-dimensional approach is required to turn this around, working with schools, colleges, other skills providers, employers and community groups – both locally and across the City Region and Mersey Dee Alliance.

Being in good employment protects health, while unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, contributes significantly to poor health. Evidence shows that good quality work is beneficial to an individual's health and wellbeing and protects against social exclusion through the provision of income, social interaction, a core role, identity and purpose. Wirral has for many years sought to address health related worklessness and has had success in doing so by reducing it at a rate of double the national average. However, high levels remain, and the pandemic and associated social and economic response has further highlighted the need to augment work that supports people to enter the job market and maintain economic independence for themselves and their families.

In terms of skills, we have strong partnerships with skills and employment providers, however, a number of priority sectors, including advanced manufacturing, health & life sciences and maritime and logistics, are experiencing skills gaps. We need to identify and address sector skills shortages and skills gaps to meet the needs of employers and boost economic growth, linked to our Left Bank ambitions.

There are also more immediate needs to support people who lose their jobs or businesses: finding creative ways of supporting them before re-engaging them into the workforce will be essential, focusing on key employability skills. We recognise that the provision of digital infrastructure does not automatically close the “digital divide” for those who cannot afford and/or do not know how to use digital services. We must therefore ensure that digital connectivity is delivered in a fair and inclusive way

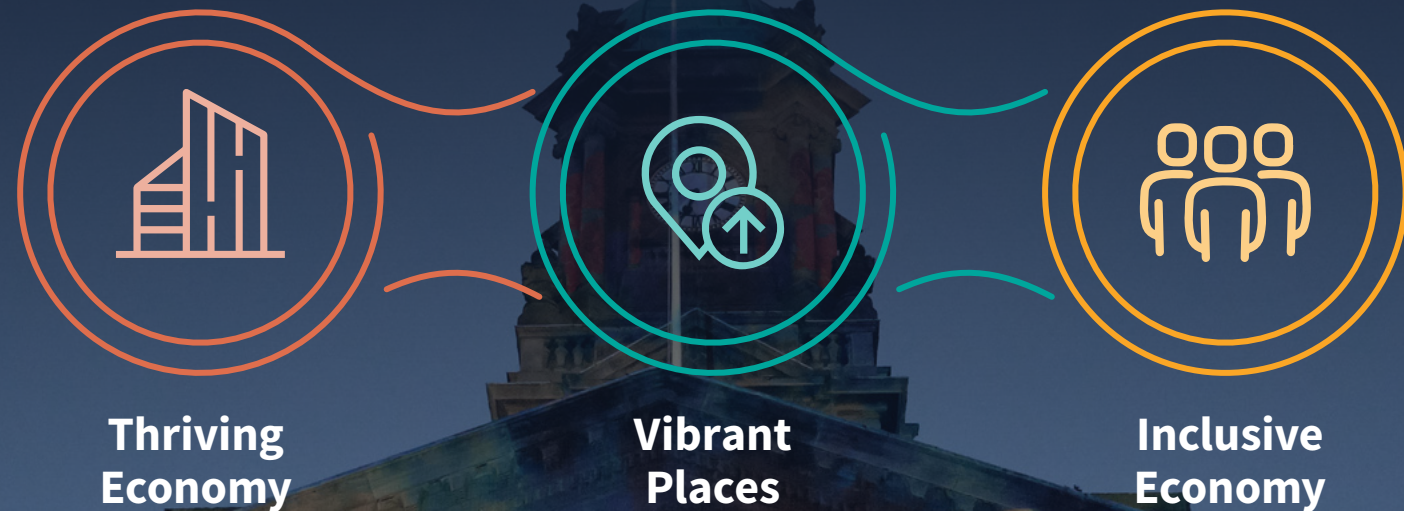
across Wirral, and that residents have suitable skills and means.

The people of Wirral are one of our most important assets and we must ensure that residents furthest away from work including those with health conditions and/or disabilities have the right support to access.





## Objectives



## PRINCIPLE



### Working Principles

In addition to the three central Objectives, the Economic Strategy will include three overarching Principles that will shape the way we want Wirral Council and its partners to work. The Objectives describe the outcomes we want to achieve and the Principles describe a cross cutting style of working:

- Community Wealth Building
- Prioritising Sustainability
- Openness and Collaboration

### Community Wealth Building

We want to put Community Wealth at the heart of what we do. Put simply, we want to ensure that more of the wealth that is both held and generated in Wirral is retained and controlled locally and flows into the hands of local residents.

Inclusive procurement is also a central component of community wealth building. All our anchor institutions – in both the public and private sectors – can better orientate their purchasing to ensure that local residents and businesses benefit to a greater extent and that providers are delivering genuine local social value through contract delivery. We can also use planning agreements as part of our developments at Left Bank to secure social value through, for example, employment and skills agreements.



Striving for more local ownership and control is another dimension and has many components. It can and will include working with local businesses to stimulate worker ownership, growing the co-operative sector, and more creative ownership and control models for assets. We must fully engage the social and community, voluntary and faith sector to make the most of these opportunities.

Facilitating socially just labour markets will be another part of the way we work. We need to shift the number of jobs that are offered on poor pay and conditions in favour of workers, and in doing so ensure that there is a better balance between shareholder value and the returns to employees.

PRINCIPLE



## Prioritising Sustainability

We have declared an environment and climate emergency and have signed up to the partnership Cool 2 Strategy – a flagship strategy that shows clearly our intent. We have also developed an Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan to set out what we will do to tackle the environment and climate change emergency. Sustainability and the move to a low carbon future is integral to the future of Wirral's economy and the UK's clean economy is estimated to grow at four times the rate of the rest of the economy.

With businesses and places, we will ensure sustainable methods of construction and renewable energy sources are prioritised; help refurbish existing residential and commercial buildings so that they use less energy; promote new buildings designed for low energy 'zero carbon'; use heat networks in urban areas; and use smart grid technologies to take advantage of the decentralisation of energy generation and storage; and enable the use of electric vehicles.



We will also support the provision of 'green and blue' infrastructure as part of our place regeneration programme, which will provide a network of green spaces and water environments to help limit negative impacts from existing and future changes in the climate.

With people, we need to work at all times to educate our residents on the climate emergency, to help them gain skills in new technologies, to prioritise active travel through promoting the benefits of cycling and walking, and to enable our residents to make a greater proportion of journeys within and between areas via public transport.

PRINCIPLE



## Openness and Collaboration

All successful economies are open to the opportunities beyond their immediate boundaries. We want to encourage businesses to be outward looking as they look for trading opportunities and expanded markets, and for our residents to take advantage of the opportunities and experiences available to them outside of Wirral. As an authority we know we are often stronger when we join forces with our neighbouring areas and build critical mass - we have seen this through our work with our City Region partners and the Mersey Dee Alliance.

We want to be seen as an area that places a premium on promoting integration and connectivity, and that readily seeks out opportunities and influences from elsewhere. As part of this agenda, we want people and businesses to generate new ideas and we will help put them into practice.



This working principle can be applied to all our stakeholders – our residents can be more outward looking and collaborative, so too can our community groupings, and so too can our business base. We recognise the value of community engagement and co-creation and will ensure that communities are fully engaged in our regeneration programme.

Through our Growth Plan, we made great progress in establishing strong partnership in areas such as health and education. We need to explore opportunities to work further together on initiatives and the co-location of services.

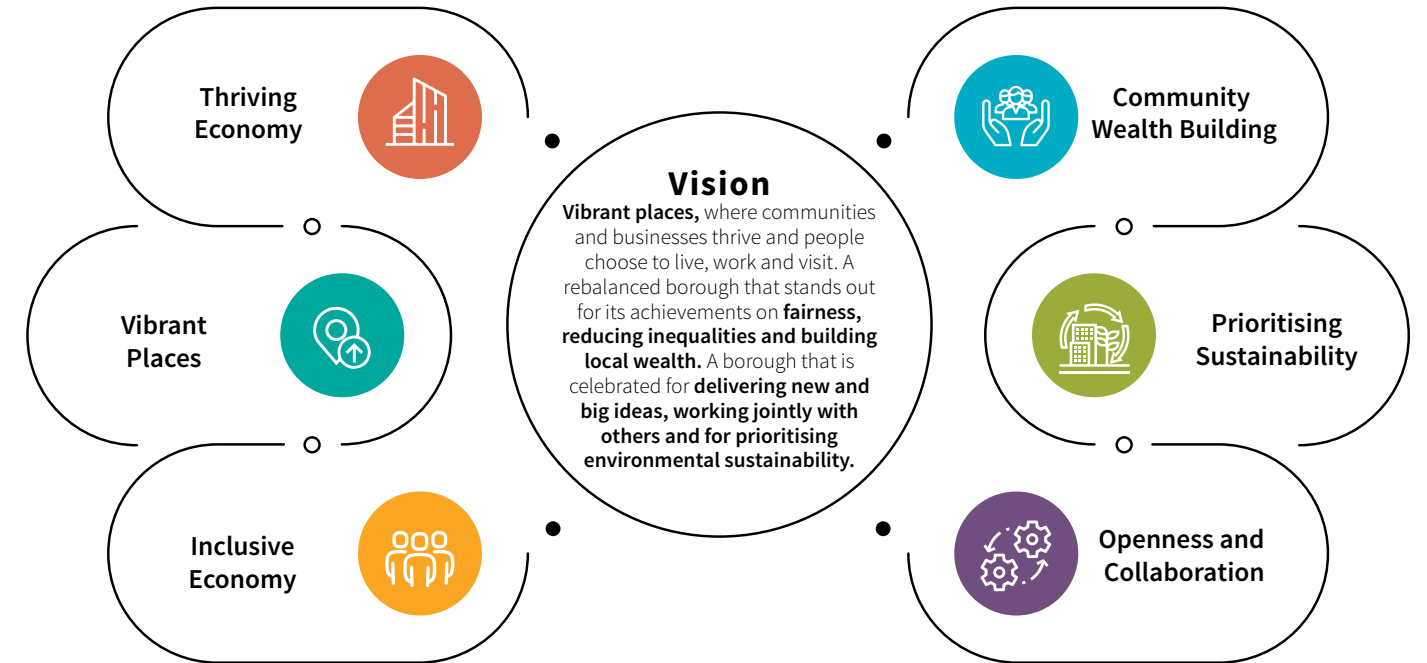
## Working Principles



## Summary of Vision, Objectives and Principles

**Three Objectives**  
What We Want to Achieve

**Three Working Principles**  
How We Want to Work



**Our headline economic outcome measures for the Wirral Plan in 2021-22 will be reviewed and monitored on a quarterly basis as part of our corporate performance framework.**

**They will be:**

- Increase the employment rate
- Reduce the Claimant Count
- Increase the Job Density Rate
- Increase the Gross Value Added (GVA) per head of population
- Increase the Business Count

# 4 Priority Actions

Despite the pandemic, we have achieved much in recent years that will contribute to the delivery of the vision and objectives of this new Economic Strategy. We need to build on this and maintain momentum. The actions detailed in this section will therefore be used to guide future projects and programmes which support our vision and objectives.



**THRIVING ECONOMY**



**Thriving Economy Output Indicators**

- Increase the number of businesses rating business support services as “excellent”
- Increase the number of “high growth” businesses in Wirral, as measured by ONS
- Increase the number of annual business start-ups
- Increase the value of inward investment in target sectors entering the borough.
- Number of responsive programmes delivered and new investment secured

Action	Lead
We will provide high quality, all-inclusive business support services to aid the stability and resilience of our indigenous businesses, promoting access to new and emerging opportunities for growth and diversification.	Wirral Council Liverpool City Region Commissioned Services Business Partners
We will focus on intensifying the innovation and growth capacity of our target sectors such as Maritime, Logistics, Visitor Economy, Advanced Manufacturing, Low Carbon and Digital/Creative, and ensure we capitalise on the wealth of regeneration initiatives in the borough and beyond to open up new markets.	Wirral Council Liverpool City Region Mersey Dee Alliance Businesses Developers
We will promote a stronger, more inclusive entrepreneurial culture in Wirral by providing effective start up support, business incubation services and active mentoring networks.	Wirral Council Liverpool City Region Business Networks
We will increase our focus on inward investment to ensure that Wirral has the optimal propositions driven through our extensive Left Bank Regeneration Programme offering the right portfolio of sites and premises and assisted through proactive support promotion.	Wirral Council Liverpool City Region Businesses Developers
We will deliver first class business infrastructure in Wirral i.e. digital infrastructure, easy access to funding, effective business networks etc	Digital Infrastructure Providers Funders Wirral Council Liverpool City Region Mersey Dee Alliance

VIBRANT PLACES



**Vibrant Places Output Indicators**

- Deliver Birkenhead 2040 pipeline projects and produce area regeneration strategies
- Secure funding and investments in our town centres and high streets
- Increase the annual number of visitors to Wirral
- Increase the number of new homes delivered on brownfield land
- Increase the number of people walking and cycling based on our green sensors.

Action	Lead
We will deliver Birkenhead 2040 and associated area-based regeneration strategies to provide a framework for growth	Wirral Council Liverpool City Region Homes England Developers Investors Registered Providers
We will strengthen all of Wirral's town centres and high streets, capitalising on existing and new government funding opportunities, to help diversify the offer and ensure their long term vitality	Wirral Council Liverpool City Region Developers Investors Registered Providers Voluntary and Community Sector
We will maximise opportunities within the visitor economy through enhancing the cultural and heritage offer and promoting Wirral's unique coastal and rural assets	Wirral Council Liverpool City Region
We will deliver a diverse and affordable housing mix, in order to create vibrant mixed communities and retain talent in the area.	Wirral Council Liverpool City Region Developers Investors Registered Providers
We will improve active and public transport infrastructure, with a particular focus on "last mile" connectivity	Wirral Council Liverpool City Region Mersey Dee Alliance Merseytravel

**INCLUSIVE  
ECONOMY**



**Inclusive Economy  
Output Indicators**

- Reduce the gap in unemployment levels between areas of disadvantage and the rest of the borough
- Achieve high performance through our commissioned services for the number of out of work residents achieving positive outcomes (into work or training)
- Increase the qualifications levels for Wirral residents
- Reduce levels of reported skills/labour shortages amongst employers.
- Numbers of responsive programmes delivered and people engaged

Action	Lead
We will prioritise initiatives that tackle the deep-rooted levels of worklessness in our most deprived neighbourhoods and address the significant underlying physical and mental health and related issues which exacerbate and perpetuate the issue.	Wirral Council Commissioned Services Health Partners Employment Partners
We will work with our employment partners to ensure the most effective and responsive labour support mechanisms are in place to guard against economic shocks/structural economic challenges and ensure we maximise the impact of our Left Bank Regeneration Programme by facilitating easy access to new opportunities for all.	Wirral Council Employment Partners Developers Businesses
We will work with our skills and education partners to secure relevant, accessible and high-quality essential skills programmes in Wirral that match the needs of our businesses, our sectoral growth and regeneration opportunities.	Wirral Council Skills & Education Partners Liverpool City Region Mersey Dee Alliance Businesses
We will work with a wide range of partners to tackle skills and education inequalities and support our residents and workforce to access the most relevant and appropriate training opportunities, opening up new employment options whilst tackling skills shortages for our key sectors.	Wirral Council Skills & Employment Partners Liverpool City Region Mersey Dee Alliance
We will deliver first class skills and employment infrastructure in Wirral i.e. maximising new initiatives, piloting new approaches to delivery, building the capacity of local provision	Wirral Council Skills & Employment Partners Liverpool City Region Mersey Dee Alliance

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING



Photo: Deana Kay

**Community Wealth Building Output Indicators**

- Increase in percentage of people earning on or above the Real Living Wage
- Increase the social value obtained from Council contracts
- Increase in the number of generative enterprises
- Increase the social value secured through planning agreements
- Increase the number of community owned assets across the borough

Action	Lead
We will promote fair and good work at all times, in line with City Region Fair Employment Charter, when engaging with businesses and partners	Wirral Council Commissioned Services Liverpool City Region Employment Partners
We will use the procurement powers of anchor institutions to promote social value, secure community benefits and develop local supply chains	Wirral Partnership
We will encourage the development of the social business sector, to support the retention of wealth locally	Wirral Council Commissioned Services Liverpool City Region
We will use planning agreements (e.g., s106) to deliver more community wealth building / and build local supply chains	Wirral Council Commissioned Services Developers Registered Providers
We will support the capacity of the community to engage in regeneration and promote community ownership	Wirral Council Commissioned Services



**PRIORITISING SUSTAINABILITY**



**Prioritising Sustainability Output Indicators**

- Secure renewable energy infrastructure as part of our place-shaping work
- Improved energy efficiency of all new/refurbished buildings
- Increase the number of businesses referred to programmes which respond to the climate emergency
- Increase in number/frequency of climate emergency communications

Action	Lead
We will prioritise renewable energy infrastructure to support the transition to zero carbon in our place-shaping work, in particular when it supports our Left Bank Regeneration Programme	Wirral Council Infrastructure Providers Developers Registered Providers
We will use Council leverage to stipulate the use of green methods of construction and sustainable building design	Wirral Council Developers Registered Providers
We will maximise opportunities to encourage local businesses to respond to the climate emergency.	Wirral Council Commissioned Services Liverpool City Region
We will cut carbon emissions by embedding carbon saving behaviours into the general public, business and all other relevant stakeholders.	Wirral Council Commissioned Services

**OPENNESS AND COLLABORATION**



**Openness and Collaboration Output Indicators**

- Increase the number of collaborative joint-working initiatives with partners
- Increase the number of projects and programmes which are based on new and innovative approaches
- Increased community participation in place-based projects
- Increased number of exporting businesses in Wirral

Action	Lead
We will actively engage a wide range of stakeholders through a joint approach, to maximise opportunities presented through the Left Bank regeneration programme.	Wirral Council Liverpool City Region Mersey Dee Alliance Commissioned Services Voluntary & Community Sector Developers Investors Registered Providers
We will ensure Wirral takes a proactive stance in becoming a test bed for new technologies, new ideas and new approaches to place-based economic development	Wirral Council Liverpool City Region Mersey Dee Alliance Commissioned Services Voluntary & Community Sector
We will enhance the community input / community co-creation in developing local regeneration schemes	Wirral Council Liverpool City Region Commissioned Services Voluntary & Community Sector
We will seize opportunities to open Wirral to external markets and to boost the exporting potential of local businesses.	Wirral Council Liverpool City Region Commissioned Services

# 5 Summary Performance Framework

We will track a series of high-level outcome measures that will show us how far we are succeeding in building a more prosperous and fairer Wirral economy. We have also identified a series of more specific output indicators that will show progress in delivering the various objectives and principles which shape this strategy. The output performance will be reviewed internally through our Regeneration Programme Management performance framework.

The overall performance framework for our Economic Strategy will be subject to an independent annual review and evaluation to test the effectiveness of our granular annual action plans and the overall progress on our 5 year priority strategy impact.




# Vision

**Vibrant places**, where communities and businesses thrive and people choose to live, work and visit. A rebalanced borough that stands out for its achievements on **fairness, reducing inequalities and building local wealth**. A borough that is celebrated for **delivering new and big ideas, working jointly with others and for prioritising environmental sustainability**.

## High Level Outcome Indicators

- Increase the employment rate
- Reduce the Claimant Count
- Increase the Job Density Rate
- Increase the Gross Value Added (GVA) per head of population
- Increase the Business Count

Objectives - Output Indicators	
<b>THRIVING ECONOMY</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase the number of businesses rating business support services as “excellent”</li> <li>▪ Increase the number of “high growth” businesses in Wirral, as measured by ONS</li> <li>▪ Increase the number of annual business start-ups</li> <li>▪ Increase the value of inward investment in target sectors entering the borough.</li> <li>▪ Number of responsive programmes delivered and new investment secured</li> </ul>
<b>VIBRANT PLACES</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Deliver Birkenhead 2040 pipeline projects and produce area regeneration strategies</li> <li>▪ Secure funding and investments in our town centres and high streets</li> <li>▪ Increase the annual number of visitors to Wirral</li> <li>▪ Increase the number of new homes delivered on brownfield land</li> <li>▪ Increase the number of people walking and cycling based on our green sensors.</li> </ul>
<b>INCLUSIVE ECONOMY</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduce the gap in unemployment levels between areas of disadvantage and the rest of the borough</li> <li>▪ Achieve high performance through our commissioned services for the number of out of work residents achieving positive outcomes (into work or training)</li> <li>▪ Increase the qualifications levels for Wirral residents</li> <li>▪ Reduce levels of reported skills/labour shortages amongst employers.</li> <li>▪ Numbers of responsive programmes delivered and people engaged</li> </ul>

Working Principles - Output Indicators	
<b>COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase in percentage of people earning on or above the Real Living Wage</li> <li>▪ Increase the social value obtained from Council contracts</li> <li>▪ Increase in the number of generative enterprises</li> <li>▪ Increase the social value secured through planning agreements</li> <li>▪ Increase the number of community owned assets across the borough</li> </ul>
<b>PRIORITISING SUSTAINABILITY</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Secure renewable energy infrastructure as part of our place-shaping work</li> <li>▪ Improved energy efficiency of all new/refurbished buildings</li> <li>▪ Increase the number of businesses referred to programmes which respond to the climate emergency</li> <li>▪ Increase in number/frequency of climate emergency communications</li> </ul>
<b>OPENNESS AND COLLABORATION</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase the number of collaborative joint-working initiatives with partners</li> <li>▪ Increase the number of projects and programmes which are based on new and innovative approaches</li> <li>▪ Increased community participation in place-based projects</li> <li>▪ Increased number of exporting businesses in Wirral</li> </ul>



**WIRRAL**

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