

TIME FOR GROWTH

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mayoral Manifesto



Foreword

Time for Growth: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mayoral Manifesto

As we look toward the future, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough stands at a pivotal moment, ready to unlock its full potential. The next mayoral term is an opportunity to build on the region's achievements, assets, and strengths. We have the tools to drive growth, power productivity, and set the foundation for a thriving, sustainable region. This manifesto lays out a clear and ambitious path for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough – a path that accelerates economic growth, propels us towards our goal of net-zero, and ensures that our businesses and communities thrive in the face of future challenges.

Through strategic investments in skills, infrastructure, and entrepreneurship, we will equip our workforce for the demands of tomorrow, ensuring the region is not just competitive but globally influential. We can deliver the changes our region deserves by empowering local businesses to accelerating our journey to net zero, and ensuring our voice is heard nationally.

With a population of 919,000 in 2023¹ and a Gross Value Added of £31 billion in 2022², Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority is home to some of the country's brightest minds, most resilient businesses, and passionate communities. By investing in our strengths, fostering innovation, and effectively utilising devolved powers, we can create an economy that works for everyone.

Harnessing regional assets, including its world-class higher education institutions, its flourishing manufacturing, life sciences and healthcare sectors will safeguard the region's future. Building on these assets will also help drive productivity and boost growth. By supporting these industries and working in partnership with the private sector we can collectively ensure that the region remains a hub of knowledge and creativity.

The Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor represents a significant opportunity for our region, promising to boost the UK economy by up to £78 billion by 2035³. This corridor will catalyse growth in science, technology, and innovation, positioning Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as key players in this transformative initiative. Additionally, enhancing East-West Connectivity will be crucial in unlocking the full potential of the region, improving transport links, and facilitating seamless business operations across the corridor.

The next mayor should leverage their powers over planning to unlock housing by focusing on the integration of housing development with transport connectivity. Improved transport connectivity and housing can create greater opportunities for people in the region by enhancing access to jobs, education, and services, thereby fostering economic growth and improving quality of life.

The CBI is committed to working in partnership with the UK Mayors Group, including the next mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough on an agreed set of priorities geared towards kickstarting growth, boosting productivity, and accelerating to net zero. By fostering collaboration and leveraging the collective strengths of the region, we can achieve our shared goals and create a prosperous future for all.

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Kickstarting Growth

The region of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has a strong business environment that allows businesses to grow. The region's Local Growth Plan is expected to set out a 10-year strategy to build on the region's unique strengths and opportunities to support growth-driving sectors, identify wider business environment priorities, and provide the framework to unlock additional investment. By providing a clearly defined vision about how the mayor and combined authority will use its devolved powers to drive growth across the region, the Plan will enable businesses to invest with greater confidence.

This region is well positioned to become a powerhouse of economic growth and innovation. With its strategic location, world-renowned academic institutions, and a thriving ecosystem of high-tech industries, the region has the potential to lead the way in the UK's economic recovery and future prosperity. The Local Growth Plan should aim to harness these strengths, creating a vibrant and dynamic business environment that attracts investment, fosters innovation, and supports sustainable development.

The region's diverse economy, which includes strong sectors such as life sciences, successful spinouts, and agri-tech provides a solid foundation for growth. However, to fully capitalise on these strengths, we must address existing challenges such as infrastructure constraints, skills shortages, and the need for greater collaboration between businesses and educational institutions. By leveraging the opportunities presented by devolution, we can implement tailored strategies that align with local needs and priorities, driving economic growth and creating high-quality jobs.

Our vision for kickstarting growth in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough includes enhancing transport, infrastructure, promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, and supporting the development of sustainable and resilient supply chains. By focusing on these areas, we can create an environment that attracts investment, supports business growth, and drives economic prosperity for the region.

The CBI is committed to working alongside the next mayor to make the case for an integrated settlement, which will provide greater flexibility and funding certainty over the long term. By fostering a climate of collaboration and leveraging the region's unique strengths, we can ensure that Cambridgeshire and Peterborough become a leading hub for innovation, productivity, and sustainable growth.

Recommendations

- Collaborate with the UK Mayors Group to amplify the collective voice and attract investment to the UK. Ensuring regional assets and opportunities of national strategic importance are given the visibility they need.
- To foster innovation and economic growth in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, the next mayor should look to build on the groundbreaking partnership established between Greater Manchester and Cambridge⁴. By strengthening ties between universities, research institutions, and business communities across the country, further collaboration could boost start-ups, attract investment, and enhance regional R&D, creating more opportunities for growth. Expanding this partnership would solidify the region's position as a global leader in innovation.
- Promote Regional Strengths in innovation, building on the region's capabilities in sectors such as life sciences, digital technologies, and agri-tech.
- Foster collaboration between universities, research institutions, and businesses to drive innovation and commercialization of new technologies.
- Leverage the region's strategic location and infrastructure to boost trade and attract international investment.
- Encourage the development of sustainable and resilient supply chains to support local businesses and reduce dependency on global supply chains.
- Work closely with the private sector and government to accelerate economic growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor, aligning with the government's growth agenda. Catalysing growth across this corridor will help to drive investment, boost productivity, create jobs and boost the UK's overall competitiveness.

By focusing on these areas, the mayor can create an environment that attracts investment, supports business growth, and drives economic prosperity for the region.



Boosting Productivity

Boosting productivity is at the heart of our economic future and is essential for ensuring long-term prosperity and competitiveness. Productivity growth enables businesses to produce more with the same or fewer resources, leading to higher wages, improved living standards, and increased economic resilience. For Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, enhancing productivity is crucial to maintaining the region's position as a leading hub for innovation and industry.

The region's diverse economy, which includes strong sectors such as life sciences, digital technologies, and agri-tech, provides a solid foundation for productivity improvements.

However, to fully capitalise on these strengths, we must address existing challenges such as skills gaps, infrastructure constraints, and the need for greater digital adoption. By leveraging the opportunities presented by devolution, the next mayor can implement tailored strategies that align with local needs and priorities.

Devolution provides us with the power to make strategic decisions that directly impact our region's economic landscape. By fostering a culture of innovation, supporting workforce development, and investing in critical infrastructure, we can create an environment where businesses thrive and productivity soars. Collaboration between local authorities, businesses, educational institutions, and communities will be key to driving this productivity revolution.

Our vision for boosting productivity in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough involves supporting digital infrastructure, developing skills, and supporting the adoption of new technologies. By focusing on these areas, the region will be better equipped to meet the challenges of tomorrow and will help to ensure businesses are competitive, globally.

Recommendations

- Fully utilise devolved powers over skills, including the Adult Skills Fund, the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers, the “youth guarantee trailblazer” and its share of the £45 million fund for tailored support for 18–21-year-olds to prepare them for employment and access education and training opportunities. This would go some way to addressing intra-regional inequities in skills, education and qualifications that would particularly benefit more rural communities, for example Fenland and Huntingdonshire⁵.
- Connectivity to the national electricity grid has been a significant challenge for firms investing into Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Whilst not a devolved matter, the mayor must use their convening power to champion the ambitions of the National Energy Systems Operator and support the regional spatial energy plan to prioritise projects that will deliver the Clean Power 2030 mission.
- Work closely with the government and neighbouring Mayoral Combined Authorities to deliver the Clean Power 2030 mission.
- Encourage businesses to adopt inclusive employment practices to help ensure that all segments of the population benefit from economic growth.
- Invest in digital infrastructure to ensure that businesses have access to high-speed internet and other digital tools necessary for modern operations.
- Develop a comprehensive skills strategy that addresses the needs of both current and future industries, ensuring that the workforce is equipped with the skills required to thrive in a rapidly changing economy.
- Support the development of business clusters and networks that can facilitate knowledge sharing, collaboration, and innovation.
- Enhance transport infrastructure to reduce congestion and improve connectivity within the region, making it easier for businesses to operate efficiently.
- Promote lifelong learning and upskilling initiatives to ensure that the workforce remains adaptable and capable of meeting the demands of new and emerging industries.

By focusing on these areas, the mayor can create an environment that supports business growth, drives innovation, and enhances productivity across the region.

Accelerating to net zero

Accelerating to net zero and achieving growth is society's defining economic challenge – one that can only be achieved through a robust partnership between the public and private sector.

The transition to a low-carbon economy is not just an environmental imperative but also a significant economic opportunity. Inaction on this front is costlier than proactive measures, as the impacts of climate change can lead to severe economic disruptions. The business community is eager to play its part in this transition, recognising that sustainable growth is the pathway to long-term prosperity.

The journey to net zero involves a comprehensive approach that spans multiple sectors, including energy, transportation, housing, and industry. Increasing decarbonisation beyond the power sector presents a substantial opportunity to grow clean energy markets, scale up infrastructure projects, and advance green technologies. By fostering innovation and investing in sustainable practices, we can create new jobs, stimulate economic growth, and enhance the region's competitiveness on a global scale.

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough region is uniquely positioned to lead this transition, with its strong academic institutions, innovative businesses, and commitment to sustainability. By leveraging these strengths, we can develop and implement strategies that not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also drive economic growth and improve quality of life for residents. The collaboration between local authorities, businesses, and communities will be crucial in achieving our net zero goals and ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come.

Recommendations

- Expand the region's transport network to ensure those in rural communities can get around more efficiently, and play a greater part in region's economy, including education and employment opportunities – especially as the use of public transport to work ranges from 41% in Cambridge City to 13–16% in the more rural local authorities of East Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Fenland and South Cambridgeshire⁶.
- Promote the adoption of renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind, to reduce the region's reliance on fossil fuels and lower greenhouse gas emissions.
- Support the development of green technologies and industries, such as electric vehicles and sustainable agriculture, to drive economic growth while reducing environmental impact.
- Implement policies that encourage energy efficiency in businesses and homes, such as grants for retrofitting buildings and incentives for adopting energy-saving technologies.
- Foster a culture of sustainability within the business community, encouraging companies to adopt environmentally friendly practices and reduce their carbon footprint.
- Invest in green infrastructure projects, such as the development of green spaces and the enhancement of natural habitats, to improve the region's environmental resilience.

By focusing on these areas, the mayor can create an environment that supports sustainable growth, drives innovation in green technologies, and accelerates the region's transition to net zero.



Conclusion

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's economy is characterised by its strong technology, research, and education sectors, supported by a vibrant academic base and a growing focus on sustainability. However, challenges such as a skills gap, transport congestion; and significant intra-regional gaps in income, skills and qualifications must be addressed for the region to fully capitalize on emerging opportunities. With proper support, especially in education, infrastructure, and international trade, the region has the potential to continue their position as an innovative and thriving business hub.

The CBI is committed to working alongside the mayor and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to help ensure sustainable economic growth. The CBI contends that when politicians, education providers, public and private sectors collaborate through shared interests, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough can unlock its full potential. CBI members based in the region stand ready to play their part in helping to drive growth and take forward the priorities within this manifesto.

A thriving region can help contribute to delivering sustainable economic growth, which will benefit not only the region but the UK as a whole. To help achieve this, the mayor should commit to working in partnership with the UK Mayors Group, which, using its convening powers, can collectively form an effective alliance for growth. By fostering collaboration on key policy areas such as skills development, infrastructure investment, and sustainable practices, the mayor can ensure that Cambridgeshire and Peterborough remain competitive and resilient in the face of future challenges.

Together, we can create a prosperous and sustainable future for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, ensuring that our businesses and communities thrive for generations to come. By embracing the opportunities presented by devolution, fostering innovation, and committing to a clear and ambitious vision, we can build a region that is not only competitive but also globally influential. Let us work together to unlock the full potential of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and secure a brighter future for all.

Reference

- 1 [Estimates of the population for England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)
- 2 [Microsoft PowerPoint - Final CPCA State of the Region Summary Slide Pack - October 2024](#)
- 3 [Reeves: I am going further and faster to kick start the economy - GOV.UK](#)
- 4 [Mayor of Greater Manchester visits Cambridge to back partnership between two centres of innovation - Greater Manchester Combined Authority](#)
- 5 [Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough | Institute for Government](#)
- 6 [Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough | Institute for Government](#)

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