

# TIME FOR GROWTH

## Hull and East Yorkshire Mayoral Manifesto



# Foreword

## Time for Growth: Hull and East Yorkshire Mayoral Manifesto

In May, the Yorkshire devolution map will be completed as Hull and East Yorkshire joins the party. This has been quite a journey, and the CBI celebrates those leaders, both civic and business, who pushed so hard to secure a devolution settlement. More importantly those leaders saw the importance in securing a settlement with a directly elected mayor and following this election the real work will begin in driving growth and prosperity that will benefit all.

The devolution settlement<sup>1</sup>, agreed under the last government, will give the mayor control of a budget worth more than £400m over a 30-year period. Additional funding will also be provided for transport, brownfield regeneration and economic growth projects including control over a devolved Adult Skills Fund and business support programmes.

The English Devolution White Paper<sup>2</sup> published in December 2024 seeks to go further and deeper, handing powers over regional spatial planning and the ability to create mayoral development corporations. Together and in partnership with the private sector and communities these can provide a powerful vehicle to help drive growth and create a shared strategy about how we wish to see the region's economy and built environment evolve and thrive.

The government has set out a bold ambition to deliver 1.5 million new homes within this parliament, and the mayor will have a role in helping to deliver this, with funding for redevelopment of brownfield sites for new housing.

The government has also set out ambitions for a net-zero economy and our region has a key role to play in this journey. As the UK's largest single contributor to CO2 emissions the ambitions set out in the Humber 2030 Vision – and successor document, Delivering the Vision<sup>3</sup> – will not only contribute towards the net-zero transition but also holds the prospect of creating new jobs and industries, underpinning national energy security, and attracting significant new investment.

The Humber Freeport presents a major opportunity for our region and alongside the ambitions of the Humber Energy Board, we see a role for the mayor in collaborating with their new counterpart in Greater Lincolnshire to work with both these private sector-led bodies to support the Humber Economic Strategy to deliver on the trading, logistics and green growth jobs opportunities for the region.

The government is also preparing a new industrial strategy that will form a key component of its Growth Mission. However, this will not be delivered by Whitehall, it will be delivered in and by regions like Hull and East Yorkshire. The new mayor will have a key role to play in driving this agenda through their Local Growth Plan, regional businesses will want to see strong alignment between the growth plan and regional economic strengths along with assessment of future growth and innovation opportunities.

Underpinning all of this will be the need to develop future skills and the talent pipeline required for growth, which will mean education programmes aligned strongly with industry and training providers having the funding and delivery powers for upskilling and retraining.

2025 is a crunch time for growth, we are at the start of a new era of regional governance and businesses have a vital role to play in driving prosperity, it is therefore important that the business voice is heard and understood by Hull and East Yorkshire's first directly elected mayor.

**Beckie Hart**

Regional Director – Yorkshire & Humber, CBI  
[Beckie.hart@cbi.org.uk](mailto:Beckie.hart@cbi.org.uk)



## Kickstarting growth

With a population of 622,000, gross value added of £15.865 bn and home to more than 20,000 businesses, Hull and East Yorkshire has strong foundations to drive growth in the industries of the future. The region already has a strong reputation for renewable energy in particular offshore wind where major investment has taken place. In Hull, employment in the creative and digital sector has risen by 43% since 2015,<sup>4</sup> whilst in East Yorkshire employment in manufacturing & engineering has risen by 25%. The region is a major gateway between the UK and the rest of the world, facilitating significant amounts of trade in goods and is the largest port complex by tonnage in the UK. However, the region must not ignore the economic geographies surrounding it, nor the wider UK mayoral regions. The Harrington Review of Foreign Direct Investment<sup>5</sup> recommended collaboration over competition between mayoral authorities, something CBI members strongly support.





## 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. By fostering a climate of collaboration<sup>6</sup> over competition, Hull and East Yorkshire can focus on securing investment based on its unique characteristics.
- More locally the Mayor of Hull and East Yorkshire must ensure strong alignment with the newly elected mayor of Greater Lincolnshire to ensure meaningful cross-estuary collaboration and drive the successful implementation of the Humber Energy Board's 'Delivering The Vision' proposals. We would encourage conversations to create a Humber Estuary Growth Zone to maximise the narrative around potential and scale of opportunity whilst providing a single front door for inward and domestic investment.
- The mayor should look to join the White Rose Agreement of Yorkshire mayors within weeks of taking office, to complete the regional jigsaw.
- Local Growth Plan alignment with regional economic strengths and the government's high growth sectors. A strategic approach to identifying and nurturing sub-sectors within the government's 8 named growth sectors set out in the Industrial Strategy green paper is essential. The methodology should be heavily data led involving analysis down to firm and regional level. The identification of high growth sectors also allows the local growth plan to be sufficiently choiceful. This process should not be to the detriment of the foundational and 'everyday' economy however, where there is often complex value chain interconnectivity. The CBI is happy to share our work on clusters and value chain mapping.
- The English Devolution white paper proposes enhanced planning powers which will enable the mayor to guide infrastructure and development projects more effectively through the formation of Spatial Development Strategies. The CBI is a strong advocate for these new powers and would encourage the mayor to prioritise this in creating an ambitious overarching regional narrative backed by a spatial plan which highlights growth opportunities.
- Transport connectivity is vital in a modern economy, ensuring people can access education and employment, and for business – having access to the widest possible labour supply and market opportunities. The mayor will have powers over some public transport, including over the regional bus network. We would encourage early conversations with industry and educators to identify how these powers could be deployed at pace. The mayor should work closely with fellow Yorkshire mayors and Lord Blunkett on this matter as part of the White Rose Agreement.
- Whilst control over rail and national highways are not currently devolved matters, the convening power of the mayor to bring together businesses, rail operators, Network Rail, Highways England, and government will help to identify and make clear what is holding back growth and prosperity for many firms and communities through poor connectivity.

## Boosting productivity

The Hull and East Yorkshire economy makes up 10.5% of Yorkshire and Humber GVA, however, overall productivity for Hull and East Yorkshire is below the national average at 87.3% and 87.6%, respectively. In addition, 91% of East Yorkshire communities are classified as rural and coastal where accessing employment and education opportunities can be more challenging. This is especially the case with young people<sup>7</sup> who often have to leave to pursue opportunities within urban centres. This is exacerbated by a lack of access to transport, housing supply and the seasonal nature of many jobs within the rural and coastal economy.

The mayor will play a vital role in ensuring skills needs can be delivered to fill the new jobs being created and drive a just transition for existing workers into future industries. Much work has already been done in identifying the skills needs of industry through the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP),<sup>8</sup> led by the Hull and Humber Chamber of Commerce.

Increasing productivity across the Hull & East Yorkshire can be achieved by aligning the local growth plan with the government's Industrial Strategy. Through devolution, we gain the power to shape policies that directly support our strengths in high-growth sectors like green technology, clean energy, digital industries, and advanced manufacturing. By combining these strengths with a commitment to improving skills, infrastructure, and innovation, we can create an environment where businesses are empowered to invest in their future and increase their productivity.

### Recommendations

- The region needs to sharpen focus on adult skills by making the skills system more responsive to business needs, with a focus on flexible upskilling, skills bootcamps and apprentice levy sharing. Adopt the recommendations made by the HEY LSIP and ensure this data is kept updated through regular dialogue with industry.
- The mayor should work with business to maximise the domestic supply of labour by increasing uptake of tech adoption to address labour shortages. The mayor should boost the output of the Made Smarter programme and replicate the impact in other regions.
- Business support will fall within the mayor's responsibilities, and this should be responsive and appropriate to the needs of industry. The mayor should work closely with the region's business representative groups and industry to ensure this remains relevant and responsive.
- A healthy economy needs a healthy workforce, and the mayor should build on previous work carried out by the HEY Local Enterprise Partnership<sup>9</sup> exploring workplace health partnerships

## Accelerating to net zero

Hull and East Yorkshire presents a very significant opportunity to lead not just Yorkshire or the UK but the world in how to deliver industrial decarbonisation sustainably and at scale. Industrial scale opportunities exist in green hydrogen development, carbon capture & storage and clean energy, but we will need the government to commit to national policies and recognise the opportunities that exist in our region. Similarly, there are major opportunities at community level through housing & building retrofitting and decarbonising public transport, both of which contribute to the overall CO2 emissions.

Decarbonisation is not only crucial for reducing greenhouse gas emissions but also for maintaining the viability of traditional industry sectors. With new and evolving industries will come a requirement for new skill sets as we move towards a net-zero future. These green jobs of the future will begin in sectors like construction, manufacturing and energy generation and distribution. Alongside new skills there will be opportunities to innovate and develop the green technologies needed to reduce emissions and develop new ways of working.

Alongside our own home-grown sources of innovation expertise, Hull and East Yorkshire is surrounded by pan-northern centres of innovation excellence also. Many of these centres will look towards our region and see industrial scale opportunities to deploy new and innovative green technology. We should embrace these opportunities.

Private sector investment can drive much of this, but the mayor will have a key role in bringing the government to the table and to help navigate the often-complicated public-private engagement needed to drive policy changes and investment decisions. The convening powers of the mayor should also help in directing investors towards a single front door and smoothing the journey around planning, grid connectivity, and skills by ensuring the right people are speaking with each other.

## Recommendations

- Work closely with the government and neighbouring Mayoral Combined Authorities to deliver the Clean Power 2030 mission. This will require certainty and clarity over timetables on key decarbonisation processes, especially on hydrogen and carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS). The mayor and their Greater Lincolnshire counterpart, working with the government, must help give the confidence to industry to invest and deliver the pathway to industrial decarbonisation set out in the Delivering The Vision.
- Connectivity to the national electricity grid has been a significant challenge for firms investing into Hull and East Yorkshire. 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 with industry to identify future 'green skills' needed to deliver the Humber Energy Board vision<sup>10</sup>. Expand apprenticeships and vocational training in green construction and renewable technology installation to ensure we have a skilled workforce ready to support the growing green economy
- Work with our regional universities and neighbouring Mayoral Combined Authorities and their associated innovation eco-systems to develop and scale up industrial innovation opportunities.





## Conclusion

When no less a body than the World Economic Forum says our region is one of only a small number of the most globally significant opportunities for industrial decarbonisation at scale then we should listen and act. Hull and East Yorkshire stands at the threshold of a transformative era, poised to leverage its unique strengths and opportunities to drive regional growth and prosperity. The devolution settlement, coupled with the ambitious plans outlined in the English Devolution White Paper, provides a robust framework for the newly elected mayor to lead the region towards a brighter future.

By focusing on key areas such as industrial decarbonisation, skills development, and strategic infrastructure planning, the mayor can ensure that Hull and East Yorkshire not only contributes to the national agenda but also becomes a beacon of innovation and sustainability. Collaboration with neighbouring regions and the private sector will be crucial in achieving these goals, fostering a climate of cooperation that amplifies the region's voice on both the national and international stage.

As we embark on this journey, the commitment to driving growth, boosting productivity, and accelerating the transition to net zero will be paramount. The CBI remains dedicated to supporting the mayor and the region in realizing these ambitions, ensuring that Hull and East Yorkshire thrives in the new era of regional governance.



# Reference

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