



**LIVERPOOL
CITY REGION**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

METRO MAYOR
LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY ANNUAL REVIEW 2023/24



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Foreword from the Mayor of the Liverpool City Region

Over the last 12 months, we have taken many positive steps towards realising my ambition to make the Liverpool City Region the best place to grow up, grow a family and grow a business. While we recognise there is much more we want to achieve alongside a new government, this past year has been one of transformation for the city region.

From the thousands of jobs, training and skills opportunities we've created, to the vital investments we've made to support our residents through the cost-of-living crisis, I'm incredibly proud of the progress we've made to transform people's lives for the better.

At every step of this journey, our residents have been at the heart of our decision-making. Because, for investment to mean anything, local people and communities must feel its benefits.

We've put an end to four decades of decline in our bus network by taking back control, opened a brand new train station served by first-of-their-kind battery-powered trains. We hosted a fortnight of fun and frivolity, that tens of millions of people around the world will never forget for Eurovision 2023.

And we saw the completion of LCR Connect, our publicly owned joint venture, offering local businesses unrivalled digital connectivity.

Looking to the future, I want to take advantage of our strengths – and potential – and turn them into profitable businesses, creating better, greener jobs and bringing greater prosperity to local people.

With further devolution of powers and funding, we can go even further to truly unleash our potential. We are home to the fastest growing city economy, have the country's most ambitious net zero plans, massive housebuilding aspirations and a plan to tackle the productivity crisis that holds our region back.

Make no mistake: this is a place on the rise. As its Mayor, I want to build the most vibrant, growing and inclusive Liverpool City Region possible for the 1.6m people who live and work in our area to succeed.



Steve Rotheram

Mayor of the Liverpool City Region

Steve Rotheram

Foreword from the Chief Executive

This annual review captures the highlights of 2023-2024, the third and final year of the 2021/24 corporate plan.

I am so proud to play a part in the diverse range of work that takes place across the LCRCA which has had such a positive impact on people, communities, and business. It is always so hard to pick out a handful to celebrate here in my foreword, so I reflected on some of the personal memories I have of the last year.

Rich conversation with the chairs of the four equality panels, insights gained from the youth CA members, inspiring testimony from people involved in Cradle to Career – all of which are shaping the new work we are taking forward on public service innovation. Inspiring time spent with leading academics and business leaders stretching the boundaries to bring forward groundbreaking ideas to power life sciences and the growth of new economies for the region. Immense pride in international visits promoting the Liverpool City Region for inward investment and the visitor experience. And the tremendous advances in connectivity through digital, bus, rail and active travel.

Now devolved powers and funding play their part in these successes, but the magic ingredients are the strength of partnership, collaboration and good humour that play out in our relationships across LCR, which result in a stronger economy and thriving communities, where no one is left behind.

I am so proud to play a part in the diverse range of work that takes place across the LCRCA which has had such a positive impact on people, communities, and business.



Katherine Fairclough
Chief Executive of the Liverpool City
Region Combined Authority

Katherine Fairclough

Foreword from Combined Authority Cabinet Members

As Cabinet Members of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Leaders of the city region's six Local Authorities, we are pleased to present the progress being made to deliver on the region's priorities during 2023-2024.

We are all extremely proud of the places that we lead and that our work together in partnership is enabling our region to create a prosperous future for our residents.

This Annual Review once again demonstrates what we can achieve by coming together at the regional level, making the most of devolved powers and funding, and the difference it can make for our residents.

We want to continue to work with our communities and partners and empower them to continue to play an important role in how we deliver for our region.

Prioritising growing our economy, jobs, skills, improving transport, housing, equality, delivering social value and dealing with the climate emergency are important to all of us.

That is why we will continue to work together as a team to address these issues, to create a stronger city region - where no one is left behind.



Cllr Mike Wharton

Leader, Halton Council



Cllr Graham Morgan

Leader, Knowsley Council



Cllr Liam Robinson

Leader, Liverpool City Council



Cllr Marion Atkinson

Leader, Sefton Council



Cllr Anthony Burns

Leader, St Helens Council



Cllr Paul Stuart

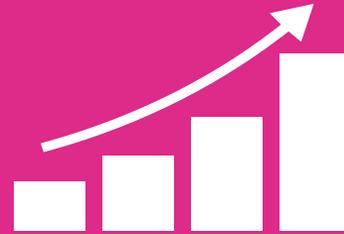
Leader, Wirral Council

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS



1.6M

residents



£34BN

economy



£5BN

visitor economy

Halton: XDock (at the 3MG, Widnes, LCR Freeport tax site)

Plans for a large-scale new logistics facility at the 3MG site in Widnes were revealed in February as part of the LCR Freeport scheme.

KKR and Mirastar have entered into a forward funding agreement to speculatively develop the logistics building, known as XDock.

The development will create around 500 full-time jobs on one of the Freeport's three tax sites and once the development is completed and fully tenanted it could also enable Halton Council to retain £2m in business rates every year for 20 years, ringfenced for investment in further regeneration projects in the borough.

The 500 jobs will be available at all levels from managerial to shop floor and will come on-stream from mid-2025.

Through the planned LCR Freeport Skills Academy, the Freeport team, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and local education providers will work to ensure local people have the skills needed to benefit from the employment opportunities.

The XDock building announcement comes after the completion in late 2022 of the Viking Building, also at the 3MG site, which is a 200,000 square foot logistics warehouse.



XDock, Halton



FAIRER

We will be recognised as leaders in social innovation and one of the most inclusive economies in the world. We will have taken proactive action to tackle inequality, remove barriers and provide opportunities for all our residents.



Crowds enjoy Liverpool's Pride celebrations

3,000

local government employees received EmbRACE Race Equality Training

79,000

employees benefitting from the Fair Employment Charter

35,480

learners across 30 colleges benefitting from £60m Adult Skills Training

24%

of adult learners from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds

OVER 1/5

of adult learners reported having a disability

900

new apprenticeships funded from £4.5m unspent apprenticeship levy

4,500

set to benefit from free digital devices and skills

£5.25M

investment in Cradle to Career scheme

£3,000

available to employers when employing young people

220

people being supported by Housing First

A FAIRER CITY REGION

Fairness is a guiding principle in everything the Combined Authority does to improve the lives of the city region's 1.6 million residents.

It is a central theme in all our work, and the Corporate Plan details a range of actions to underpin this commitment. Over the last twelve months, significant action was taken to embed equality and diversity into all activities and decision making, while reducing injustice and disadvantage, to deliver a fairer city region.



Mayor Steve Rotheram joins apprentices in Stadler factory



Race Equality Hub staff with Mayor Steve Rotheram

Race Equality

In March, [Mayor Steve Rotheram declared the city region's £2.3m Race Equality Hub open for business](#) at a special event in Liverpool's Sefton Park Palm House, marking the area's biggest ever investment in tackling racial inequality.

The Hub will support employers and agencies to enable Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic businesses to thrive, creating sustainable employment opportunities. Race equality training is being delivered to more than 21,000 people – at the Liverpool City Region's six local authorities and the Combined Authority – and has already seen almost 3,000 employees trained as part of the EmBRACE programme.

Equality Panels

The Combined Authority has four Equality Panels - disability, race, gender and sexuality - to support the region's political leaders and policymakers tackle discrimination and disadvantage that cause injustice and inequality in society.

The panels have met through the year with the Mayor, the Chief Executive and each other and are playing an instrumental role in helping the Combined Authority to embed equality, diversity and inclusion - providing advice, guidance and scrutiny on the design and delivery of services, policies, and practices and helping put equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of decision-making.

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

Fair Employment Charter

Liverpool City Region
Fair Employment Charter logo

Fair Employment Charter

The Mayor's [Fair Employment Charter](#) is driving improvements in workers' pay, conditions and rights. The Charter encourages businesses to pay staff a Real Living Wage, clamp down on the use of zero hours contracts, provide mental health support, encourage flexible working and engage with trade unions. Since its launch, 124 organisations have signed up to the charter, representing a total of 78,537 employees across the Liverpool City Region.

The Youth Combined Authority

Established by Mayor Steve Rotheram in 2022, the Youth Combined Authority is made up of young people from across the city region. It empowers the youth voice by giving members the chance to feedback to policy leads about important issues and strategies. As a result, the Youth Combined Authority is able to influence decision-making in the key areas of Economic Development and Growth, Employment and Skills, Energy and the Environment, Culture and Transport.

The Youth Combined Authority meets weekly online, often joined by policy leads or portfolio holders, and in person several times a year. A recruitment campaign to encourage involvement from more young people of all backgrounds and representing communities from across the city region is currently underway.

Membership is for up to two years and to join, young people must be aged between 13 and 18 (or 13 and 25 if the person has special educational needs and/or a disability) and live in the Liverpool City Region.



Abbie - a member of the Youth Combined Authority



Adult Education Awards

Adult Education Budget

The Combined Authority [invests more than £60m](#) in local skills training for residents each year. In the last academic year, the devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) – now known as the Adult Skills Fund – supported 35,480 learners across 30 local colleges and community learning and independent training providers.

More than half of participants were female, nearly a quarter (24%) were from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, and over a fifth of learners (22%) reported a disability, learning difficulty or health issue.

During 2023/24, a 6.5% uplift in funding was provided for colleges and training providers, with a £2.9m investment through the Government’s Multiply Numeracy programme to support more than 3,500 enrolments. Over £1m of funding in 2023/24 was sub-contracted or granted to local voluntary and community sector organisations and more than 1,200 learners were supported into Level 3 skills through a Free Courses for Jobs programme.

Skills Bootcamps

Through locally commissioned Skills Bootcamps, the Combined Authority supported more than 2,100 residents to access training in sectors such as rail, construction, digital, HGV, engineering & manufacturing, health and social care including life sciences, and hospitality.



WATCH: Skills Bootcamps helped Kodi change careers

A Pathways to Teaching initiative was launched in the 2022/23 academic year to help fill local skills gaps by training Further Education tutors. The first six-month course saw 34 students pass with ten progressing to the next level of qualification and eight securing jobs. The success was celebrated at a new [awards ceremony at The Mansion House in Calderstones Park](#).

The Combined Authority and its partners continued to innovate adult skills delivery with the Test and Learn approach of piloting new courses and initiatives. This year the idea of holding a single, city region-wide awards ceremony for adult learners that celebrates their achievements with local colleges and training providers was tested and a ceremony, co-ordinated by Realise, was held at [Liverpool’s The Florrie community centre in May](#).



Kodi Benson landed her dream job after attending a skills bootcamp

Apprenticeship Levy

In May 2023, Mayor Steve Rotheram called on big businesses to help fund apprenticeships at smaller firms in the Liverpool City Region – in a move that would not cost the larger businesses an extra penny.

Large employers are required by law to pay 0.5% of their wage bill towards an Apprenticeship Levy – which is collected by the government to fund apprenticeships. Levy payers can spend their own allocation on in-house apprentices or gift up to 25% of the money to fund apprenticeships at other organisations. The Combined Authority acts as a broker, helping transfer unspent levy into funding apprenticeships at local firms.

During the last 12 months, more city region employers contributed to the scheme with latest figures showing the Combined Authority has helped to transfer almost £4.5m of unspent levy funding to pay for more than **900 new apprentices** – generating a return on investment of more than £120m for the city region.



WATCH: Bowring Golf Course apprentice greenkeeper gets his dream job



Apprentice greenkeeper Peter Elliott meets Combined Authority Employer Brokerage Manager Joe Keegan at Bowring Park and Golf Course



Digital inclusion

The Combined Authority is committed to ensuring everyone has access to the skills and support needed to fully participate in an ever-evolving digital world.

Last August, a **project was launched** to provide more than 4,500 people across the Liverpool City Region with free tablets, internet access and on-line skills training as part of the Digital Inclusion Initiative. Working with Lloyds Bank and Vodafone, roll-out began with a pilot scheme delivering tablets and training to 300 local unemployed or economically inactive people.

In February, the CA gave **hundreds of retired desktop computers**, laptops and monitors to a charity scheme for digitally excluded people, becoming the first authority outside London to sign up to the National Device Bank. Run by recycling network the Good Things Foundation, the scheme has already provided more than 126 people across the city region with free equipment. More than 200 donated devices will be professionally refurbished before being distributed to people in need.



WATCH: The Combined Authority donates retired IT equipment to the National Data Bank which helps digitally excluded people



Staff at a Cradle to Career event

Young People

The Combined Authority is committed to improving the life chances of young people and ensuring they are not held back by a lack of opportunity, often linked to where they grow up.

In September, a pioneering [£5.25m plan to improve opportunities in some of the city region's most deprived areas](#) was officially launched following its success in North Birkenhead.

Instigated and funded by the Steve Morgan Foundation and SHINE, and in partnership with Wirral Council and national charity Right to Succeed, the North Birkenhead Cradle to Career programme has helped transform the reading age of children, which is seen as a leading indicator of educational outcomes and future earnings.

By working closely with eight schools in North Birkenhead, the average reading age for children in the area has improved dramatically in just four years from being more than a year below expected to higher than the national expectation.

In addition, the area has seen almost twice the rate of Child Protection step downs compared to the rest of Wirral and this was accompanied by a large fall in social care referrals.

With Combined Authority funding, the Cradle to Career programme is being rolled out to a further five areas with programmes already underway in Northwood, Knowsley, and Halton Lea, Runcorn. Discovery phases are also taking place in Sefton and St Helens, with Liverpool to follow in September as the programme expands across all six boroughs of the city region.



[WATCH: Cradle to Career launch](#)

Meanwhile, a transformational £2.2m plan to support the development of four 'not-for-profit' children's homes is underway. The Juno project aims to open 10 homes within five years, creating opportunities for children to stay close to their local area and removing high profits from the system. The first home is up and running, rated good and there are two more properties due to open later this year.

The Combined Authority is also working with the city region's local authorities to recruit, retain and develop staff in the Early Years Education and Childcare sector to respond to an expected increase in demand following a major expansion of funded Childcare places.

Using its convening role, the authority brought together local authorities, training providers, colleges, childcare providers and national government bodies to raise the profile and recognition of the sector as it expands to enable children across the city region to have access to high quality Early Years Education and Childcare.

In January, as part of the Young Person's Guarantee (YPG), a new scheme was unveiled which will see wage incentives of £3,000 offered to local employers who recruit young people. The aim is to get 240 more people aged 18 to 25 into education, employment or training over the next three years.

In December, it was revealed that a £2m support scheme to help the city region's most vulnerable residents withstand the cost-of-living crisis had helped people to write off personal debts totalling £3m in its first nine months. Mind and Money is run by The Women's Organisation, Vauxhall Law Centre, Pennysmart and Citizens Advice and has already helped more than 1,600 people – cutting debt by £7.4m and maximising income by a total of £2.2m.



[Learn more about the Mind and Money Scheme](#)

Housing First and Households into Work

The Combined Authority's Housing First programme takes a pioneering approach to homelessness by providing a home as a starting point then tailoring support to the individual.

The programme works with people experiencing entrenched homelessness and with complex needs and is now supporting more than 220 people - with over half currently housed and successfully maintaining a tenancy.

An independent final evaluation of the scheme has highlighted the scheme's positive impact, benefits and achievements.

The programme has also successfully 'graduated' service users who no longer require Housing First support onto the Households into Work programme, which supports people back into the workplace.

Despite supporting more than 4,000 people since the launch of the Households into Work programme in 2018, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities are still facing barriers to accessing opportunities in the workplace. Working alongside the Race Equality Hub, Households into Work recently created four new roles to help tackle the inequalities preventing people from getting the help they need to move forward. The new team members came into post in April and are now working across the city region.



WATCH: The everyday work of a Households into Work advocate



Knowsley: Headbolt Lane

The new £80m Headbolt Lane station opened in October 2023 marking a historic day for rail transport in the Liverpool City Region and beyond.

Headbolt Lane provides a vital transport link for tens of thousands of residents in the Northwood and Shevington areas of Kirkby where more than 60% of households do not have access to a car.

It became the second new station to be opened by Mayor Steve Rotheram and was the first expansion of the Merseyrail network in almost 30 years - achieved by using pioneering battery technology.

Services are provided by the UK's first all-electric battery-powered passenger fleet, part of the city region's £500m investment in new trains, that enables expansion of the Merseyrail network without the need for an expensive electric 'third rail'. The trailblazing technology could see Merseyrail services extended across the city region and beyond, including Runcorn, Wrexham and Warrington.

Headbolt Lane station is fully accessible from pavement to platform, and features a bus interchange with services to Skelmersdale, 300 park-and-ride spaces, secure cycle storage and links to local active travel routes.

This integration with the wider transport network is a key part of plans for a London-style integrated transport network which aims to make journeys quicker, cheaper, greener and more reliable.



WATCH: Mayor Steve Rotheram joins passengers at the opening of Kirkby's new Headbolt Lane Station



A new Class 777 train at Headbolt Lane station, Kirkby



STRONGER

We will be recognised on the international stage as a hub of good business and innovation. We will have attracted investment to continue to develop our unique specialisms and be known for our expertise in science and innovation. There will be significantly more businesses providing good quality jobs for our residents.



The Spine, Paddington Village

£800M

and 8,000 jobs
to be delivered
through the
Life Sciences
Innovation Zone

ONE

new Local Visitor
Economy Partnership

ONE

new Business and
Enterprise Board

THREE

new cluster boards

£900K

support for Gather
digital, creative and
tech business support

21

Innovation Zone
projects set
to supercharge
life sciences

£17M

commitment from
the CA to work on
Littlewoods film and
TV campus

214KM

LCR Connect gigabit
capable broadband
network completed

A STRONGER CITY REGION

The Liverpool City Region is forging a stronger, more prosperous future through world-leading innovation, targeted support for pioneering businesses and major initiatives designed to attract inward investment.

In April this year the city region became one of only three areas in the UK to gain both investment zone and Freeport status – offering compelling incentives to domestic and overseas investors.

The Combined Authority also created a new private sector-led Business and Enterprise Board, chaired by David Meyerowitz and three cluster boards representing key strengths in health and life sciences, advanced manufacturing and digital and creative. The new boards are designed to harness the expertise and voice of business leaders in policy making and complement the long-standing LCR Innovation Board, which was the first of its kind in the UK.

In May, a new Local Visitor Economy Partnership, led by Tony Hall CBE, Lord Hall of Birkenhead, was also unveiled to help steer the city region’s tourism, hospitality and events industry to new heights.

Innovation and Investment

Liverpool City Region has been changing the world through innovation for more than 300 years and its world-leading research and development (R&D) continues to underpin the drive for inclusive economic growth, as highlighted in the Combined Authority’s Plan for Prosperity and Economic Opportunities Framework.

In March 2023, the city region was named one of 13 areas described as ‘Investment Zones’ triggering a year of intense activity in which the Combined Authority worked closely with partners to identify 21 projects that would supercharge the city region’s highly productive health and life sciences sector.

Liverpool City Region already boasts the UK’s largest concentration of infection R&D – worth £2bn a year - and one of Europe’s largest pharma clusters. The Investment Zone, known locally as the Innovation Zone, is poised to take the sector to the next level by creating new hi-tech facilities, providing business and innovation support and training the next generation of talent.

In March, it was announced that the duration and funding would be doubled to 10 years and £160m respectively, with the Zone forecast to attract up to £800m of public and private investment and create 8,000 jobs, in addition to a £450m investment by Astra Zeneca in its Speke vaccine facility.



Combined Authority Chief Executive Katherine Fairclough, right, at MIPIM

[Ambitious plans for the city region’s Life Sciences Investment Zone](#), were formally revealed to an audience of global investors on March 12 at leading real estate and investment event MIPIM. A [64-page Prospectus](#) showcasing the 21 projects and highlighting the city region’s world-leading innovation and health and life sciences strengths was also unveiled.



[WATCH: Liverpool City Region’s Life Sciences Investment Zone video](#)

In June, the [first seven projects were approved by the Combined Authority](#), including the creation of new £21m high-containment labs that will dramatically accelerate development of new treatments to fight deadly infections by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine-led iiCON (Infection Innovation Consortium).

Other projects include health and life science skills programmes and £9.5m to support a £24m expansion of lab and office space at the North of England's only national science and innovation campus, Sci-Tech Daresbury. Final project approval will follow in the coming weeks and months after further scrutiny.

Three Innovation Zone tax sites at Maghull Health Park, St Helens Manufacturing and Innovation Campus and Sci-Tech Daresbury will offer financial benefits to expanding or relocating businesses. Halton and St Helens borough councils will also be able to retain business rates on new properties to help pay for further developments.

The year included other major activity to support the city region's ambitions to invest 5% of GVA in Research and Development by 2030 – nearly double the national target – which would deliver an estimated gross economic benefit of £41.7bn GVA, 10% increase in productivity, and 44,000 new jobs.

To achieve the target the city region will build on its world-leading strengths in infection prevention and control, materials chemistry, AI solutions and emerging technologies and its growing specialisms in net-zero and maritime.

In November, the first year of Liverpool City Region's landmark partnership with Innovate UK was celebrated with the unveiling of a [second round of Launchpad grants for innovative local companies](#). The 13 successful projects include plans to bring wind power back into commercial shipping and the development of bracelets to help diagnose ADHD.



Mayor Steve Rotheram, right, during Innovation Investment Week

In May, the [Liverpool City Region's first Innovation Investment Week](#) highlighted the city region's world-leading capabilities and billions of pounds of investment opportunities.

Four days of innovation-themed events included a local launch of the Life Sciences Investment Zone and the unveiling of a primary school book to inspire the next generation of innovators. The week culminated in the sold-out third LCR Innovation Investment Summit, which attracted experts and investors from across the UK and overseas.

 **[WATCH: Innovation Investment Summit video](#)**

The city region continued to build on its innovation partnership with South Korea's second city and the world's fifth busiest port, Busan, that was signed in June last year. Over five years, the deal will see the two famous port cities actively co-operate on innovation in digital, smart cities, clean energy and net zero, and health.

Liverpool City Region Freeport

Having opened for business last year, the LCR Freeport now boasts three customs site operators.

In addition, the development of a massive new logistics facility at the 3MG site in Halton, one of the Freeport's three tax sites, was announced earlier this year.

Development of the XDock building, by KKR and Mirastar, [will create 500 jobs](#) at all levels from managerial to shop floor and will come on-stream from mid-2025.

The development could also enable Halton Council to retain £2m in business rates every year for 20 years, once the development is complete.

It is estimated the LCR Freeport could create more than 14,000 new highly skilled jobs, delivering £800m of investment and generating an additional £850m of GVA for the Liverpool City Region economy, once fully operational.

**INVEST
LIVERPOOL
CITY REGION**



A CGI of the new XDock building being developed on the Freeport tax site in Halton

Business and Enterprise Board

This year saw the Combined Authority strengthen the voice of business in the city region, with the creation of a high-calibre **Business and Enterprise Board**. Chaired by former Haier Europe Chief Executive, David Meyerowitz, the new board replaces the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in providing business representation.

Bringing the business voice directly into the Combined Authority's policy-making processes is enabling it to work more closely with businesses, especially those in industry clusters that will be of critical importance to the future success of the city region economy.

Reporting into the Business and Enterprise Board are three new **cluster boards**, representing the city region's key growth sectors of Advanced Manufacturing, Digital and Creative, and Health and Life Sciences.

In June, hundreds of business leaders, partners and stakeholders gathered at Aintree Racecourse for the LCR Talking Business convention. The interactive event was an opportunity to share the Combined Authority's economic vision, insights and strategy and celebrate business successes.

It was also a chance for the wider business community and support organisations from all sectors to tell us about their priorities and to debate growth plans and investment opportunities.



WATCH: Mayor Steve Rotheram explain why we've set up the Business and Enterprise Board



Local Visitor Economy Partnership

The Liverpool City Region's six councils and the Combined Authority have joined forces to create [a new partnership](#) to promote the area's unique cultural offer and boost its £5bn-a-year visitor economy.

Chaired by Tony Hall CBE, Lord Hall of Birkenhead, the new partnership will work to boost the local visitor economy, which employs around 51,000 people, and position the region as one of Europe's major events capitals.

Known initially as the Local Visitor Economy Partnership, it brings together 15 national and regional board members from the worlds of sport, film, music, hospitality, retail and leisure.



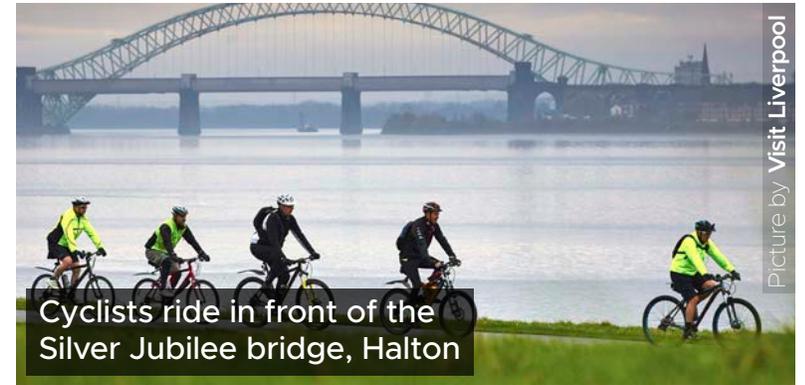
Children play in front of the lighthouse on New Brighton beach, Wirral



Up close with a lion at Knowsley Safari Park, Knowsley



People stand next to Antony Gormley's Another Place on Crosby beach, Sefton



Cyclists ride in front of the Silver Jubilee bridge, Halton



Friends laugh in front of the Liver Building, Liverpool



The Dream sculpture, St Helens

Business Support

In October last year the Combined Authority approved [a further £900,000](#) for its successful Gather programme, to provide support for a further 120 digital, creative and tech companies.

The additional investment builds on the first £3.5m phase of Gather, that saw 178 digital, creative and tech (DCT) companies create 314 new jobs with a collective net turnover increase of £18m.

Delivered by Form, Gather provides support for digital, creative and tech leaders through online programmes, workshops, bespoke consultancy and one-to-one support.

This year saw a Liverpool City Region Combined Authority loan fund reach the milestone of [securing nearly 4,000 jobs](#), with the fund being reinvested to help grow the economy and deliver yet more jobs.

Created in 2011, the Chrysalis Fund has invested around £53m across 13 projects, creating or safeguarding nearly 4,000 jobs, developing 1m square feet of quality employment floor space, and remediating 19 hectares of previously developed land.

High profile projects supported through the Chrysalis Fund include the redevelopment of Liverpool's first public library on Duke Street which is now leased to a multinational entertainment company, and Project Violet, a 43,000 sq. ft. extension to Sci-Tech Daresbury's national science and innovation campus.

The fund has also supported Venus 217, a major distribution facility on Knowsley Industrial Park, and Mersey Reach, a development on Dunnings Bridge Road in Sefton, featuring industrial units, a petrol station and a drive through coffee shop.



A Gather event



The refurbished Duke and Parr building on Duke Street



Mayor Steve Rotheram joins celebrations as work starts on the Littlewoods building

Work is continuing on major projects supported by the Combined Authority, with the new Everton stadium at Bramley Moore now providing a striking addition to Liverpool's waterfront.

Work is also underway at the [iconic Littlewoods building](#) where the Combined Authority has committed to invest up to £17m to support its transformation into a world-class film and TV campus, as part of plans to make the city region the 'Hollywood of the North'.



[WATCH: Work begins on Liverpool's old Littlewoods' building](#)

LCR Connect

The city region entered a new digital era with the completion of the area's flagship [LCR Connect project](#).

The 214km gigabit-capable, full-fibre network delivers some of the fastest internet speeds and will help make the region the most digitally connected area in the country.

Experts estimate LCR Connect, which is 50% publicly owned, will deliver an initial £105m boost to the local economy and that, with 100% full fibre coverage across the city region, the economic boost could be worth up to £1bn, creating thousands of local jobs and training opportunities.

The LCR Connect network will provide more than 28,000 local businesses and organisations with access to the new gigabit-capable service.

In addition to the immediate cost savings, businesses and organisations benefit from full fibre connectivity by improving productivity. Better connectivity brings access to new business processes and increases the speed and reliability of data transfer within and between businesses, with the ability to access agile cloud-based services.



[WATCH: LCR Connect is live](#)

Social Value

The Combined Authority is committed to maximising social value delivery across all activities. Over the last year, the focus has been on continuing to embed social value at the heart of everything the organisation does. This includes introducing a new social value measurement approach to provide a consistent and robust way to measure the impact activities are having, convening and connecting with partners across the region to share best practice and maximise the collective social value impact, and delivering social value training to colleagues across the organisation to increase understanding.

This year's Social Value Annual Report is due to be published in the autumn. It will highlight how social value is being prioritised as a core part of flagship programmes such as Digital Inclusion, Bus Franchising, Construction, Transport and Race Equality.

During 2023-24, more than 88% of Combined Authority contracts included social value as part of the awarding criteria.

Liverpool: Littlewoods film and TV complex

Work is now underway to transform the iconic art deco Littlewoods Building on Liverpool's Edge Lane into a major film and TV production complex.

The Combined Authority has committed up to £17m to develop The Depot – two film and TV studios now open and managed by Liverpool Film Office – and larger studios in the adjacent Littlewoods building as part of plans to turn the city region into the 'Hollywood of the North'.

Once complete, tenants and visitors will also be able to take in spectacular views across the city from a new roof garden, with plans to make the building more accessible to surrounding communities.

With historic buildings, parks and outstanding natural scenery, Liverpool is already the most filmed UK city outside London. The Littlewoods development is designed to retain post-production work in the city region, while developing new talent and boosting the economy.

It is part of a joined-up approach to ensure Liverpool City Region remains at the top of the list when directors and scouts are making decisions about where to base their productions. From music videos to major blockbusters, the city's streets are rarely off both the small and big screens.



A CGI shows how the Littlewoods film and TV complex will look



CLEANER

We will be a net-zero carbon city region, recognised as a pioneer in sustainable approaches to living, travel and doing business. With a relentless focus on addressing the climate emergency, we will place ourselves at the forefront of the Green Industrial Revolution. We will become a UK leader in clean energy production, generating power from tidal, offshore wind and hydrogen.



Family enjoying a coastal walk

£105M

housing retrofit
funding secured

6,000

properties retrofitted

700

solar panel
installations

£32.4M

brownfield land
projects since 2020

58

Hydrogen Buses

£70M

committed to active
travel network

£11M

project to install
energy efficient
lighting in the
Queensway Tunnel

700

tonnes reduction
in CO2 emissions
through E-scooters

£30,000

grants in Community
Environment Fund
phase 3

£54M

Glass Futures opened

A CLEANER CITY REGION

Progress towards increasing green energy production while reducing energy use was made over the last year as the city region strives to become net-zero by 2035 – more than a decade ahead of the national target.

Major steps were taken to decarbonise the city region’s public transport, while work continued to support grassroots environmental schemes and to inspire young people to protect the planet.

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority was the first to declare a Climate Emergency and is proposing the world’s largest tidal power scheme that would deliver enough energy to power up to a million homes.



Earlier this year the Combined Authority decided to pursue a barrage between the Wirral and Liverpool as the preferred option for the high-profile [Mersey Tidal Power Project](#).

The Combined Authority has now started the formal planning process and a ‘scoping opinion’ will be submitted to the Planning Inspector later this year. The barrage scheme – the ‘first of a kind’ in the UK - could generate clean, predictable energy for 120 years and create thousands of jobs in its construction and operation.

Construction of a barrage would open the possibility of a first-ever cycling and pedestrian route over the river between Liverpool and Wirral and could also provide a defence against future flooding risks associated with climate change.

Over the last three years, the authority has undertaken early technical work to develop the potential scope of the scheme, which could be up and running within a decade, playing a huge role in the region’s push to be net zero carbon by 2035.

As part of plans to make Mersey Tidal Power a reality, collaboration continues to grow with K-Water, South Korean operators of the world’s largest tidal range power scheme at Sihwa Lake, who returned to the city region in late 2023 for a Tidal Range Symposium.



Mersey Tidal Power logo



[WATCH: Fly-through of a potential Mersey Tidal barrage](#)



[WATCH: South Korea’s K-water joins UK experts at Liverpool City Region Combined Authority tidal symposium](#)



Mayor Steve Rotheram visits a retrofitted home with staff from Next Energy

Retrofit – for warmer, more energy efficient homes

Reaching the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority’s target of becoming net zero carbon by 2035 will mean halving the city region’s total energy use.

Domestic properties produce nearly a third of all carbon emissions so making the city region’s housing stock more energy efficient is a vital element of achieving net zero while keeping people warmer and reducing their energy bills.

The Combined Authority has already bid for and won £105m in funding to support low-income households by retrofitting around 10,000 properties with energy efficient measures including external wall insulation, roof insulation, heat pumps and solar panels. So far, nearly 6,000 properties have been completed.

The Combined Authority is committed to securing further funding wherever possible to expand the retrofit programme to benefit as many households across the city region as possible.

[WATCH: Homes in Toxteth get efficiency retrofitting thanks to Liverpool City Region Combined Authority](#)

So far, the bulk of the Combined Authority’s housing retrofit work has been focused on lower income households and social housing properties.

To support homeowners who are self-funding, in November the Combined Authority launched a second round of a group-buying programme for solar panels and batteries, called Solar Together.

Under the programme, residents join together to purchase solar panels and batteries, reducing installation costs and giving them the reassurance that the installation is backed by the Combined Authority and their local council.

Over the two rounds of the scheme, more than 700 installations have been completed, reducing installation costs by up to 33% for a typical 14-panel layout.

[WATCH: Meet a happy Liverpool City Region Solar Together customer](#)

[WATCH: An Ince Blundell couple explain the benefits of having an air source heat pump installed](#)



Pictured (L to R): Cllr Graham Morgan, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's Portfolio Holder for Housing and Spatial Planning, Tracy Gordon, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Lead Officer – Housing Partnerships, Steve Rotheram, Mayor of the Liverpool City Region, Sharon Morris, Riverside Head of Sales, Cllr Liam Robinson, Leader of Liverpool City Council.

Building New Homes

Last September saw local leaders visit a development of 105 new homes built at [Finch Gardens in Dovecot](#). These properties were the first of around 4,000 new homes that will be created across the city region, thanks to the £60m Brownfield Land Fund.

The 105-property development is a partnership with Riverside, Liverpool City Council, and Birkenhead-based developer Lovell, and has delivered a combination of two, three and four-bedroom homes.

Finch Gardens has been created on the empty site of a former 1950s housing estate and was funded by the Mayor's Brownfield Land Fund, Homes England, and the Recycled Capital Grant Fund.

Since the fund was announced in July 2020, the Combined Authority has already approved plans to invest £32.4m in 20 projects across the region, which could deliver more than 2,600 homes. The entire £60m project is expected to create around 4,000 homes.

Decarbonising Transport

The last 12 months saw significant steps towards decarbonising the city region's public transport in tandem with work to deliver an attractive, quick, convenient and affordable network that provides a genuine alternative to the car.

Introduction of new hydrogen-powered buses continued and funding was secured for [58 fully-electric double-decker buses for the Liverpool City Region](#). The city region's bus fleet is already more than 70% zero or low emissions and includes buses powered by hybrid electric and biomethane gas.

The first stage of a planned 600km network of new and upgraded walking and cycling routes was delivered in early 2024 – with more £70m committed to deliver enhanced walking and cycling infrastructure across the city region. It is expected that more than 260km of the planned network will have been completed by 2026.

£11m is being invested in Queensway Tunnel modernisation including installing new energy efficient lighting and in October 2023 more than £10m was committed to [increase the number of electric vehicle charging points](#) in the city region - expanding the on-street charging network to help car owners without private driveways.

Meanwhile Liverpool's e-scooter hire scheme, now in its fourth year, remains one of the most widely used in Europe, reducing CO2 emissions by an estimated 700 tonnes.

To encourage more people on to public transport, roll-out of a new £500m greener and more accessible train fleet was completed and progress was made towards introducing simpler and more affordable ticketing.

Community Environment Fund

The third year of Mayor Rotheram's [Community Environment Fund](#) was launched with grants of up to £30,000 available for green projects across the city region.

Successful schemes will encourage long-term behavioural change, while improving the city region's environment and safeguarding green spaces.

The fund has already supported 92 local environmental projects including community gardens, bikes for veterans, beekeeping and food growing initiatives.

It has so far seen more than 750 people across the city region volunteer time to deliver projects creating 15,000 m² of new habitat, planting 30,000 plants and trees and producing over 8,000 kg of sustainable food.



Mayor Steve Rotheram at a children's bee-keeping project supported by the Community Environment Fund



Glass Futures site, St Helens



A world-first biofuel trial for glassmaking in St Helens, led by Glass Futures

Picture by Bernard Platt

Glass Futures

Recruiting its first full-time employees just over four years ago, Glass Futures opened its new £54m research facility in St Helens last June and is due to commission a globally unique glass pilot furnace, capable of producing 30 tonnes of glass per day, towards the end of 2024. This will be equipped with a host of capabilities to investigate a wide range of new technologies that will help decarbonise the glass sector.

As a not-for-profit membership organisation, Glass Futures has already attracted more than 42 members, including glass manufacturers from all sectors of the industry that collectively operate more than 300 glass furnaces, plus suppliers, global brands, industry bodies and several universities.

Originally supported with £9m from the Combined Authority, amongst other funders, Glass Futures is also working closely with government bodies such as UK Research and Innovation and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), helping to secure more than £100m of grant funding over the last five years for its members and partners. A number of key research areas have been identified to focus efforts on over the next five years to decarbonise the sector, from low carbon fuels, carbon capture, and improved process control to increasing recycled content in the production process.

Sefton: Salt and Tar

One of the newest and most ambitious event venues in the city region is Salt and Tar in Bootle.

Located on the Leeds Liverpool canal, and supported by £1.65m from the Combined Authority, the venue, created by Sefton Council, opened last summer with a three-day music weekender.

The first major event to take place at Salt and Tar, the festival was supported by local bands, The Lathums, Red Rum Club and Cast. More than 6,000 tickets were sold, with revellers coming from across the UK and as far afield as France and Australia.

The venue is going from strength to strength with music legend Sir Tom Jones due to headline at the canal side venue for two dates in August. But while it's considered a catalyst for the regeneration of Bootle, it's not all about big-name artists. Salt and Tar also engages with the local community on family events, education classes and workshops, music, art and comedy.





CONNECTED

We will connect all our communities to opportunity, physically and digitally. Our public transport system will be reformed, fully integrated, and provide a genuine alternative to the car. We will be the most digitally connected city region in the UK.



People enjoy the park on a summer's day

£500M

new trains
roll-out completed

£80M

Headbolt Lane
station opened

£15M

upgrade at
Lea Green station

6,000+

responses to
Bus Franchising
consultation

70%

support for
Bus Franchising

£2

adult bus
fare scheme

£9M

funding for 58
electric buses

260KM

active travel network
to be complete
by 2026

60%

back active
travel schemes

5M

scooter rides
since launch

£10M

committed to EV
charging points

£26M

investment in new
Mersey Ferry

A CONNECTED CITY REGION

Major investments to deliver Liverpool City Region public transport and digital networks fit for the future were completed during 2023/24, with more projects underway to create a London-style transport system that's quick, simple, affordable, and accessible to all.

Roll-out of the city region's £500m publicly owned trains was completed and included the introduction of the UK's first all-electric battery powered passenger fleet, allowing extension of the Merseyrail network for the first time in a generation.

A landmark decision was taken to reform the bus network and a deal was signed to build the first new Mersey Ferry in more than 60 years on the banks of the river in which it will operate.

Alongside large-scale investment in transport infrastructure, digital connectivity in the region took a giant leap forward with the completion of a brand-new ultrafast, full-fibre network which could help generate more than a billion pounds for the local economy.

Rail

The new £500m Class 777 fleet entered passenger service in January 2023 and is now operating across all lines and branches of the Merseyrail network.

The trains were designed with help from the public and boast a range of accessibility features including pioneering sliding step technology that meets the platform edge, providing level access for all.

In October 2023, UK rail history was made as the first trains in the new all-electric passenger fleet to feature battery technology made their maiden journey to the [newly opened Headbolt Lane station in Kirkby](#). The £80m station, which provides a vital transport link to communities in Northwood and Tower Hill, is the first expansion of the region's rail network in almost 30 years.

The trailblazing battery technology, which removes the need for an electric 'third rail', could also see Merseyrail services extended across the city region and beyond, including to Runcorn, Wrexham and Warrington.



Mayor Steve Rotheram with a new battery-powered Class 777 train



New Class 777 train at Headbolt lane station



At Lea Green in St Helens, a £15m upgrade of the station facilities was delivered, including a larger waiting room, an increase in park and ride capacity and improved active travel links – as well as the city region’s first CYCLOPS junction, which allows pedestrians, cyclists and motorists to use a junction at the same time.

Work to deliver a new rail link in the heart of one of the city region’s fastest growing areas moved forward at pace. In May 2024, ahead of the start of a public consultation, images were unveiled showing how the new deep-level Liverpool Baltic station will look.

Plans include step-free access from street to train, fully accessible passenger toilets, secured monitored cycle parking and links to an enhanced local active travel network.

The new station is part of Mayor Steve Rotheram’s ‘Merseyrail for All’ commitment to reach communities that are not currently connected to the local rail network.

The Mayor, who signed a new devolution deal with Department for Transport that could pave the way for greater integration of rail infrastructure in the region, also pledged to build a further three new stations at Daresbury in Halton, Woodchurch in Wirral and Carr Mill in St Helens. Work to develop all three is scheduled to start by 2030.

In May 2024, the Combined Authority announced a £19m investment to install lifts at four further stations on the Merseyrail network – Aigburth, Port Sunlight, Rock Ferry and Walton - bringing the total number of stations with planned or delivered step-free access to 65, or around 80% of the region’s rail network, making it one of the most accessible in the country.



WATCH – Headbolt Lane station opens

Bus

Buses are the backbone of the Liverpool City Region transport network. More than 400,000 journeys are taken by bus in the city region every day – accounting for over 80% of all trips on public transport. In communities across our region buses connect people to work, schools and colleges and to shops and leisure activities.

In October 2023, the results of a major public consultation on the future of the city region’s bus services were published.

More than 6,000 responses were received with [almost 70% of those respondents supporting the introduction of franchising](#) and saying they believed it would have a positive impact on future bus network improvements.

After careful deliberation and analysis of the results, in October 2023 [Mayor Rotheram took the landmark decision to move forward with franchising of the region’s bus services](#), reversing nearly 40 years of deregulation.

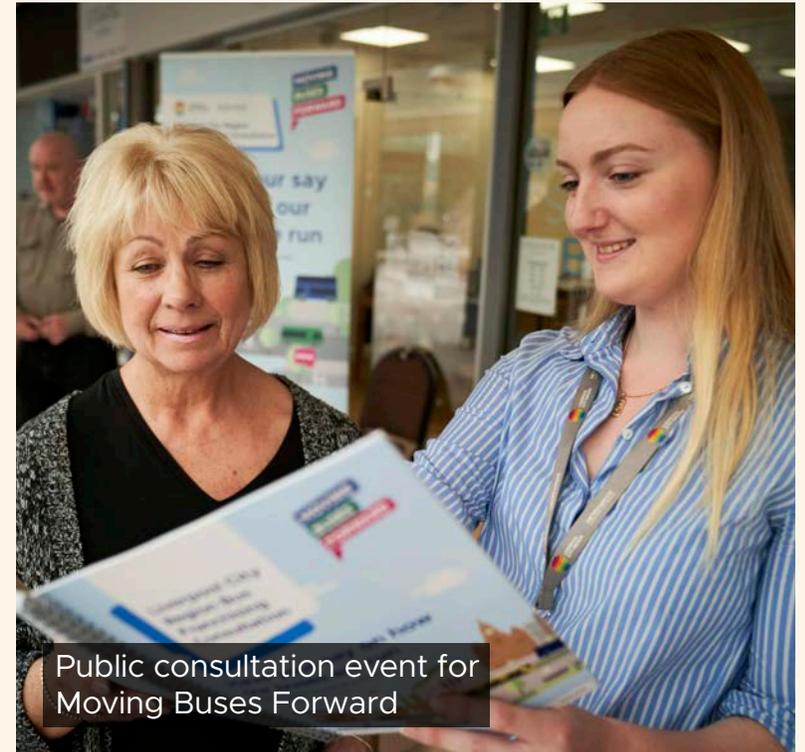
Bus franchising will give the city region greater control over fares, routes and timetables, allowing the services to be operated in the interests of local bus users, with surplus profit reinvested into improving services.

The plan is to better integrate the bus network with other modes of transport, including the region’s new publicly owned trains, active travel routes and Mersey Ferries. Tap-and-go ticketing and daily fare caps will also be rolled out, meaning passengers will always pay the lowest price for their journey.

To ensure a smooth transition, bus franchising is set to be introduced in phases, with the first franchised buses starting in St Helens by late 2026 and a fully franchised system operating across the whole of the Liverpool City Region by the end of 2027.

Earlier this year bus users in St Helens were given the opportunity to [provide feedback on plans for the future of the network](#). People in Halton, Liverpool, Knowsley, Sefton and Wirral also be invited to have their say about the future of services in their areas over the coming months.

The Combined Authority continued to ensure that bus travel in the Liverpool City Region was as affordable as possible, joining the national £2 adult single fare scheme, which has been extended until the end of 2024. As part of the Combined Authority’s 2024 budget, it was also announced that the cost of the young person’s unlimited dayrider pass, MyTicket, would be frozen until at least 2026.



Public consultation event for Moving Buses Forward



Work to decarbonise the region’s bus network moved forward over the last year. More than £9m of ZEBRA (Zero Emission Bus Regional Area) funding was secured to help bring **58 fully-electric double-decker buses to the Liverpool City Region**, further bolstering the existing zero-emission fleet. The Combined Authority will contribute £22m in match-funding, bringing the total amount of money committed to the project to more than £30m.

The new vehicles will join the city region’s current fleet which is already more than 70% zero or low emissions, including state-of-the-art hydrogen buses as well as buses powered by hybrid electric and biomethane gas.

In December 2023, night bus services made their highly anticipated return to the Liverpool City Region. Mayor Rotheram and the Combined Authority worked with local campaign groups and the hospitality industry to reinstate the services, which were withdrawn during the COVID-19 pandemic.



The N1, operated by Stagecoach, runs between Liverpool and Wirral with services every hour from midnight until around 5am every Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

The late-night bus services are intended to give a boost to the region’s vital night-time economy, allowing visitors to bars, clubs, live music venues and theatres – as well as those who work in them – to travel more easily, safely and cheaply after hours.

Enhancing the safety of the bus and wider transport network, particularly for women and girls and members of minority communities, remained a priority for the Combined Authority this year.

Working closely with partners in Merseyside Police, the Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner’s office and LCR Pride Foundation, Mayor Rotheram launched a new initiative aimed at providing help to people who feel vulnerable, distressed or are being targeted with abuse or intimidation.

Bus stations across the Liverpool City Region are now designated ‘safe places’, providing a temporary refuge for those who need one.

Staff have also been trained to provide help and reassurance to those who need assistance, as well as information on available support services, with designated safe place champions at each major bus station in the region.

Active Travel

The Combined Authority made further progress in its goal to make active travel easier and safer, with the aim that walking and cycling become the first choice for short journeys.

The first stage of the planned multimillion pound, 600km network of new and upgraded walking and cycling routes was delivered in early 2024.

Schemes completed in this phase include better active travel links for Leasowe Railway Station in Wirral, Sankey Canal in St Helens, the Silver Jubilee Bridge in Halton and the Crosby Coastal Path in Sefton.

On the Liverpool Loop Line, which runs from Aintree to Halewood in Knowsley, 15 access points were also upgraded making the route easier to use for everyone, including people in wheelchairs and with buggies.

To date more than £70m has been committed to deliver enhanced walking and cycling infrastructure across the city region. Preparations for the next phase of the network have already begun, with design and development work well underway alongside public consultation planning.

Routes set to begin construction this year include major schemes at Sci-Tech Daresbury in Halton and the Port of Liverpool in Sefton, creating sustainable active travel links to key employment sites.



Walking and cycling network

Working closely with local authority partners across the region, it is expected that more than 260km of the planned network will have been completed by 2026.

Data suggests huge backing for the investment in active travel infrastructure within the region, with a recent report from independent sustainable transport charity Sustrans showing almost **60% back schemes that prioritise walking and cycling connectivity.**

Investment in projects aimed at improving access to walking and cycling and encouraging behaviour change has also been ramped up – from an active travel social prescribing pilot to an expanded programme of all-ages cycle safety training.

School Streets schemes were also successfully delivered in Southport, Sefton - reducing traffic congestion and driving down pollution at school gates during pick up and drop off times.



Voi Scooter at the Pier Head

And Liverpool's e-scooter hire scheme celebrates its fourth year in the region in 2024. Delivered in partnership with Liverpool City Council and operator Voi, the trial is one of the most widely used in Europe with more than 5 million rides clocked up so far, reducing CO2 emissions by an estimated 700 tonnes.



WATCH: Sustrans Walking and Cycling Index launch



WATCH: School Streets schemes launch in Sefton

Tunnels, highways, EVs

The Mersey Tunnels are a key part of the city region transport network and a vital cross river link between communities. This year they continued to benefit from an ongoing investment and modernisation programme aimed at future-proofing them for years to come.

Work is progressing on a major [£11m upgrade of lighting in the Queensway Tunnel](#), which celebrates its 90th anniversary this year. The project matches similar improvements carried out in 2018 on the Kingsway Tunnel.

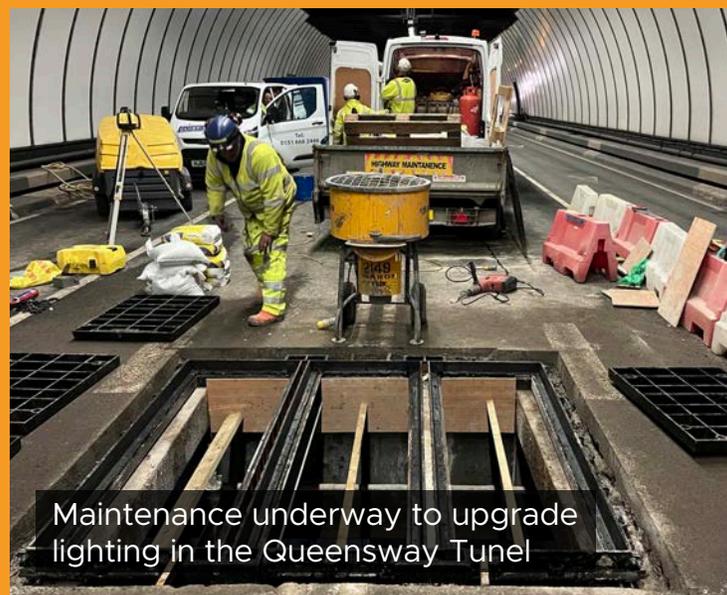
Images and video shared in January 2024 revealed the scale of the works, which will see existing lighting throughout the 2-mile tunnel replaced by a new LED system.

The project – which has been carried out largely during temporary weekend closures to minimise disruption for tunnel users – has also allowed further crucial maintenance, including the replacement of road deck access covers and the installation of cabling to power new variable message signs.

The new ultra energy efficient lighting will result in a 60% reduction in the carbon footprint of 220 tonnes of carbon each year. With a lifespan of 25 years, once complete the new system will help to deliver significant savings on energy.



Queensway Tunnel at night



Maintenance underway to upgrade lighting in the Queensway Tunnel

Elsewhere on the city region's highway network, in October 2023 more than £10m was committed to [increase the number of electric vehicle charging points](#).

The funding, secured by Combined Authority, will be used to improve and significantly expand the Liverpool City Region's on-street charging network helping households without private driveways or off-street parking to access charge points, removing a potential barrier to the use of electric vehicles.

Charge points are also set to be installed at key locations such as railway station car parks and the funding will support an increase in the number of fast charging hubs in the city region – which can power up electric cars in as little as 20 minutes.

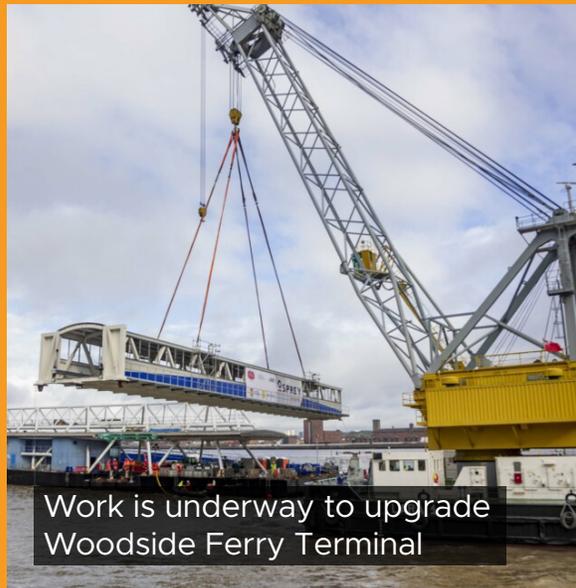
The project will create a number of jobs and training opportunities in the region, with funding to employ an Electric Vehicle project team to work across all six boroughs of the city region.



Children enjoy a day out on the ferry



Mayor Steve Rotheram joins workers at Cammell Laird



Work is underway to upgrade Woodside Ferry Terminal

Ferries

The world-famous Mersey Ferries – which have provided a vital cross-river link since the 1200s – enjoyed their **most successful year** since before the Covid-19 pandemic, with River Explorer Cruise ticket sales increasing by more than 12% between Summer 2022 and 2023.

In December 2023 it was announced the first new Mersey Ferry for more than 60 years will be built entirely within the Liverpool City Region.

Following more than a year of detailed negotiations, an agreement was reached between the Combined Authority and Cammell Laird that will see the new vessel being constructed solely at the firm's historic Birkenhead shipyard, on the banks of the River Mersey.

The new ferry will be designed to provide passengers with greater comfort, accessibility and an improved customer experience. The £26m project will also see upgrade works take place on one of the existing vessels to improve its performance and reliability.

The move ensures the future of the world-famous Mersey Ferries for generations to come.

Work is also set to start on an **£8.6m upgrade to Woodside Ferry Terminal**, as part of a major project delivered in partnership with Wirral Council which aims to turn the area into a vibrant and unique waterfront destination.

The investments are part of the Combined Authority's 20-year Mersey Ferries strategy, which includes the multi-million-pound Seacombe Ferry Terminal upgrade and funding for the Eureka! Science + Discovery attraction which were completed in October 2022.



WATCH: New Mersey Ferry to be built solely at Cammell Laird

Smart Ticketing

Progress continued to be made on plans for a simplified ticketing system for the Liverpool City Region, where customers always pay the best price for their journeys.

More than £13m is being invested in technology and infrastructure to deliver a new tap-and-go system as well as enabling contactless and mobile payments with automatic fare capping.

Under the planned improvements, passengers will be able to use the same card or ticket whether travelling on buses, trains or ferries.

Tap-in-tap-out ticketing is set to be rolled out across the Merseyrail network in two phases from Autumn 2024. The first phase will allow passengers to pay using a MetroCard linked to their bank account. The second phase, due to launch in 2025, will allow passengers to tap a contactless bank or credit card or use mobile payments to make their journeys.

Also, as part of Mayor Steve Rotheram's plans to make travelling on the city region's public transport cheaper and easier, in May 2024 new self-service kiosks and Flexi Tickets were introduced for Mersey Ferries.

Passengers can now buy tickets for Ferry services, as well as combined tickets that include The Beatles Story museum and bus sightseeing tours, from self-service kiosks in Seacombe and Pier Head Ferry Terminals.

The New Mersey Ferries Flexi Ticket, available for use during peak commuting times, allows passengers to buy six or 10 crossings in advance. The Flexi Ticket improves on the standard single or return and makes the ferries the cheapest one-way option to cross the river during peak hours.



Digital Connectivity

Connecting people with opportunity extends beyond physical transport and earlier this year work was completed on the flagship **LCR Connect project**: a new 214km full-fibre, ultrafast, gigabit-capable digital network spanning the Liverpool City Region.

The network enables the city region to enter a new digital era, delivering some of the fastest internet speeds that will help make the region the most digitally connected area in the country.

Experts estimate LCR Connect, which is 50% publicly owned, will deliver an initial £105m boost to the local economy and that, with 100% full fibre coverage across the city region, the economic boost could be worth up to £1bn, creating thousands of local jobs and training opportunities.

The LCR Connect network will provide more than 28,000 local businesses and organisations with access to the new gigabit-capable service.

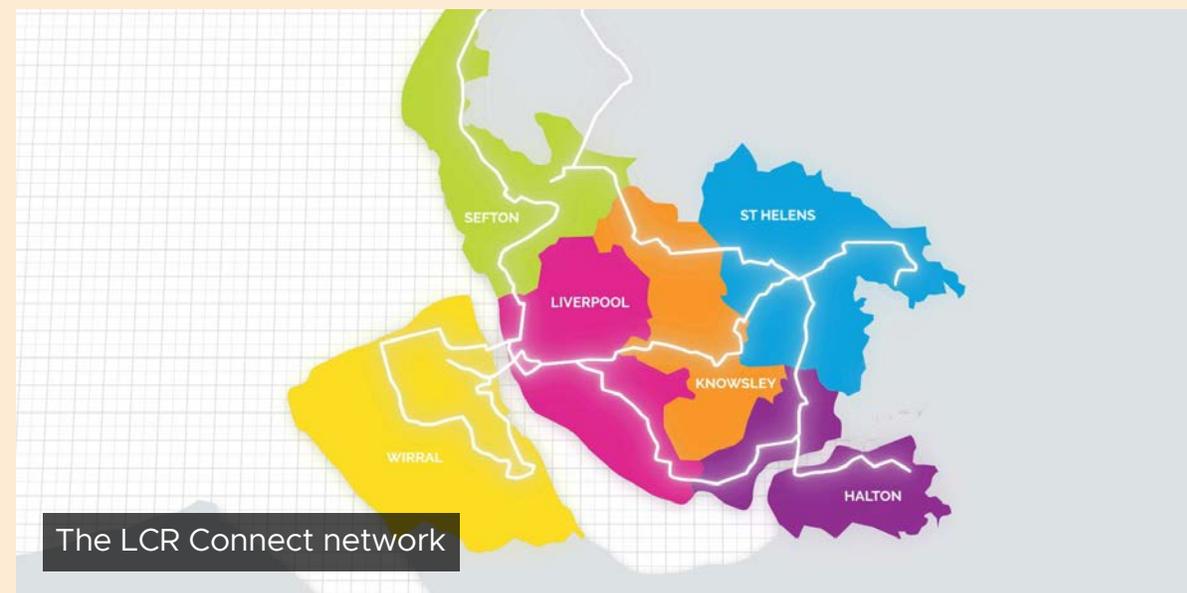
In addition to LCR Connect the Combined Authority also worked hard to help digitally excluded people to access to the skills and support needed to fully participate in an ever-evolving digital world. Activity included the launch of a project to provide more than 4,500 people across the Liverpool City Region with free tablets, internet access and on-line skills training as part of the Digital Inclusion Initiative.



WATCH: A partnership to tackle Digital exclusion in our region



Mayor Steve Rotheram joins staff at LCR Connect event



The LCR Connect network

St Helens: Lea Green railway station

A £15m upgrade of Lea Green railway station in St Helens is set to complete this year, thanks to funding from the Combined Authority.

The station is a vital link to Liverpool, Manchester and beyond serving communities living and working south of St Helens town centre, including Sutton Manor and Clock Face.

The project is being delivered in partnership with St Helens Council with funding from the Transforming Cities Fund. Improvements include a new station building, attractive and comfortable passenger waiting rooms and a doubling of its park and ride capacity, with 450 car parking spaces.

Extensive new active travel links were also constructed as part of the project, including the city region's first CYCLOPS junction (Cycle Optimised Protected Signals), designed to enable pedestrians, cyclists and motorists to safely use the junction at the same time.

It is hoped the upgrade, which allows easier multimodal transport interchange, will attract new passengers to the rail network, reducing congestion and helping bring down carbon emissions.



Lea Green station CGI



VIBRANT

We will be a great place to live, visit and work. We will continue to invest in our international image brand positioning and developing a world-leading cultural offer. Our city and town centres will be creatively reimagined alongside the communities who use them, providing opportunities for business and supporting the wellbeing of all communities.



Picture by Ant Clausen

The spectacular River of Light trail attracted thousands of people to Liverpool's waterfront in October and November 2023

60M

visitors a year to
the city region

£54.8M

economic boost
from Eurovision

260,000

Open Golf spectators

150,000

Taylor Swift fans

7th

best city in the world
– according to
Time Out, and UK's
best food city

1,933

filming days in
the region

5th

annual Culture and
Creativity Awards

10

giant bamboo art
installations

12

week public
engagement on
Spatial Development
Strategy

A VIBRANT CITY REGION

From world famous culture and sport to architectural gems and stunning natural scenery, Liverpool City Region is a place where people love to live, work, visit and invest.

The world's seventh best city according to Time Out, Liverpool is a vibrant, welcoming, UNESCO City of Music, famed for its nightlife, sport, humour and, of course, The Beatles.

The city region is home to two cathedrals, great public parks, museums, galleries and theatres, two Premier League football teams, the Grand National, Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Europe's oldest Chinese community and one of the world's most recognisable waterfronts. And a thriving grassroots arts scene puts the cool into Liverpool City Region.

Its cultural, tourism and creative sectors continued to flourish during the last 12 months, building on the monumental success of hosting the Eurovision Song Contest on behalf of Ukraine in May 2023.

Further international events have followed including the 2023 Open Golf Championship at Hoylake, and Taylor Swift's three-night spell at Anfield – strengthening the city region's growing reputation as one of Europe's major event capitals.

Local Visitor Economy Partnership

The visitor sector is a key part of the city region's economy employing 51,000 people and generating £5bn annually with around 60 million people visiting the city region each year.

However, the city region is not resting on its laurels and in May the Combined Authority and the six local authorities came together to create a pioneering new Local Visitor Economy Partnership to help steer the sector to the next level and further promote the city region as a world-famous, world-class destination and events capital.

Chaired by former BBC Director General Tony Hall CBE, Lord Hall of Birkenhead, the 15-strong Board features leading figures from across the sector who will bring expertise from the worlds of sport, film, music, hospitality, retail and leisure. They will work together to lead, advise, influence and champion the Liverpool City Region as the destination to visit, invest and stage major events in. The new Board is now shaping a five-year destination management plan which will be launched later this year.



Major events

In May last year, the city region redefined how the Eurovision Song Contest is delivered. The **success of hosting Eurovision was revealed in the results of in-depth independent studies** that showed nearly half a million people attended Eurovision events, delivering a £54.8m boost to the city region's economy, with restaurants, accommodation providers, shops, bars and transport providers all benefitting.



WATCH: Relive the Liverpool City Region Eurovision experience

Since Eurovision, the city region has continued to show its dexterity and expertise at delivering major events, hosting more than 260,000 spectators at the Open Golf Championship at Hoylake and welcoming more than 150,000 people to the annual Grand National festival at Aintree.

In June this year, more than 150,000 Taylor Swift fans flocked to the city region to enjoy three memorable nights of her Eras tour at Anfield stadium – her only performances in the north of England.

While Anfield and Aintree are no strangers to hosting major events, the Combined Authority has helped fund development of new venues such as the Shakespeare North Playhouse and a thriving site that's attracting big names to Bootle. Music and arts venue Salt and Tar is fast becoming a premier place for live entertainment with Sir Tom Jones set to headline at the canal side venue in August 2024.

Part of an ambitious new regeneration programme for Bootle town centre, delivered by Sefton Council and backed by a £1.65m investment from the Combined Authority, Salt and Tar is an important catalyst for the regeneration of the town. Last summer a 3-day music weekender marked the venue's opening and was supported by local bands The Lathums, Red Rum Club and Cast. Sir Tom will play two dates at the canal side venue, as part of his 'Ages & Stages' Tour.

The city region's growing status as one of the world's top visitor destinations was further evidenced in a series of guides by influential publication [Time Out](#), which named Liverpool the world's 7th best city (and highest ranked non-capital city), beating the likes of Paris, Tokyo and Rome. Time Out also named Liverpool [the UK's best city for food \(and 11th best globally\)](#) and the Baltic Triangle was ranked the world's 11th coolest neighbourhood.



A band performs at Salt and Tar in Bootle



St George's Hall dressed for Taylor Swift's landmark concerts in the city



Littlewoods Building CGI

Hollywood of the North

Liverpool is already the most filmed UK city outside of London. In 2023 alone, Liverpool Film Office facilitated 301 productions, consisting of 1,933 film days, boosting the local economy by £43.6m and supporting 1,493 full-time equivalent jobs.

The Combined Authority is determined to build on that success to boost the local economy, create opportunities for local people, develop local talent and position the city region as the ‘Hollywood of the North’: a place that’s not just brilliant to film but can also provide top facilities for post-production work.

In November, with the backing of up to £17m from the Combined Authority, work started on turning the [Littlewoods building complex](#) into a world-class film and TV campus.

The Combined Authority’s investment has already developed The Depot – two film and TV studios adjacent to the former Littlewoods building which are now open and managed by the Liverpool Film Office.

Through its £3m LCR Production Fund, also managed by the Liverpool Film Office, the Combined Authority has succeeded in attracting high-end TV and film productions to the city region.

The Fund has so far supported seven productions, including *The Responder*, written by former Merseyside Police Officer Tony Schumacher, *Time and Help*. Together they have won four BAFTAs, generated two re-commissions and are forecast to recoup £1m return on investment, while creating 402 full time equivalent jobs.

Most recently, the Fund has agreed to support [This City Is Ours](#), a new BBC crime drama starring Sean Bean and from the award-winning creators of *The Crown*.





LCR Culture and Creativity Awards

In March this year, the [5th annual LCR Culture and Creativity Awards](#) were hosted by TV presenter and Olympic gold medallist Sam Quek MBE at St Helens Rugby League Stadium. The glittering event celebrated the achievements of the city region's creative and innovative talent.

Music festival Africa Oyé scooped the People's Choice Award for Outstanding Contribution to Culture, after more than 3,000 votes were cast by the public. Actor and comedian Johnny Vegas presented his 'Benidorm' on-screen mum – Liverpool-born actress Elsie Kelly – with a Judges Inspiration Award for Lifetime Achievement, while Roger Phillips was commended for his 42 years of service to the BBC.



[WATCH: Find out more about the LCR Culture and Creativity Awards](#)



The annual Borough of Culture award rotates between the city region's six local authorities and in January it [passed from St Helens to Wirral](#). Borough of Culture is part of the Mayor's commitment to spend at least 1% (£300,000) of the Combined Authority's annual gainshare funding on cultural projects and activities.

In August last year, as part of the cultural events programme, Imagine Bamboo is Everywhere saw 10 giant bamboo art installations take centre stage. Delivered by Imagineer Productions with support from Culture Liverpool, the structures appeared at events across the city region with music and performers engaging people on the environmental benefits of bamboo as a sustainable building material.



[WATCH: Imagine Bamboo is everywhere](#)

Spatial Development Strategy

Part of making sure the city region is a great place to live, work and study is ensuring things are built in the right places. That's why, earlier this year the Combined Authority carried out a 12-week public engagement giving local people a say on a draft strategy intended to ensure appropriate development across the city region.

The draft Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) outlines the potential for development in the region between now and 2040.

The comprehensive plan sets out how future development can contribute to the region's overarching objectives, such as decarbonisation, tackling health inequalities and building an inclusive economy.

The Combined Authority's Spatial Planning team is now making sure the comments received are reflected in the draft Spatial Development Strategy that will be submitted to government.

Wirral: Woodside

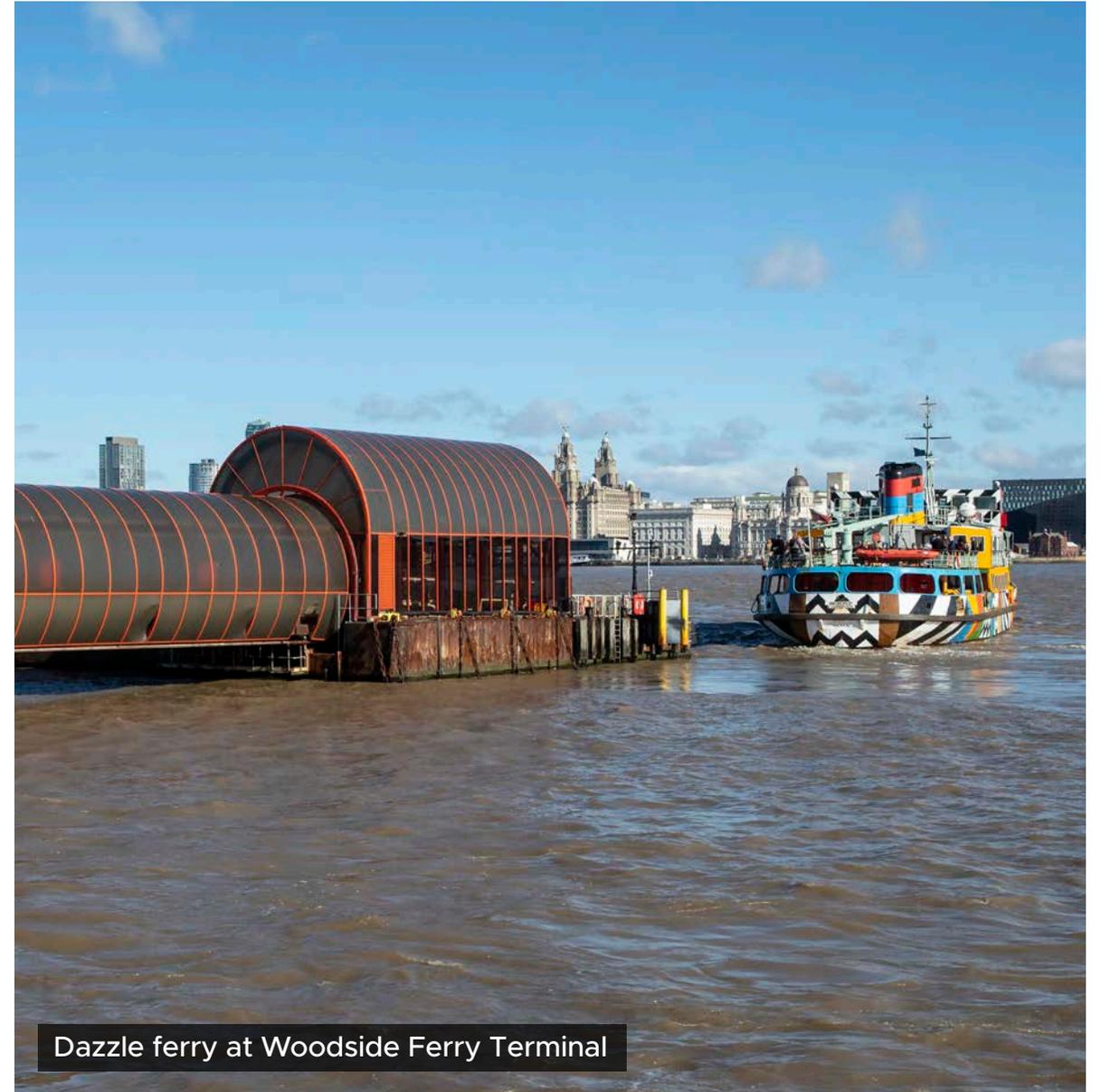
Plans for the regeneration of the Woodside area of Birkenhead, including the historic Mersey Ferries terminal, continue to progress.

An £8.6m upgrade will see a new landing stage and linkspan bridge installed, with work set to begin in the coming months. It follows a similar multi-million-pound modernisation of Seacombe Ferry Terminal, completed in October 2022.

The works are being undertaken as part of wider plans from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Wirral Council to transform the area into a vibrant and unique waterfront destination.

The £23m vision will see improvements to the public realm and enhanced connectivity between Woodside and Birkenhead town centre. Around 1,700 homes, two hotels and new tourist attractions all feature as part of the masterplan.

It's one of a number of major schemes the Combined Authority is delivering on the Left Bank of the River Mersey – with the first new Mersey Ferry in more than 60 years being commissioned at Cammell Laird shipyard in late 2023, and proposals for a new Mersey Tidal Power barrage linking Liverpool and Wirral also moving forward.



Dazzle ferry at Woodside Ferry Terminal

Cabinet members May 2024

Steve Rotheram

Mayor of the Liverpool City Region

Councillor Mike Wharton

**Deputy Mayor
Leader, Halton Council**

Councillor Graham Morgan

Leader, Knowsley Council

Councillor Liam Robinson

Leader, Liverpool City Region

Councillor Marion Atkinson

Leader, Sefton Council

Councillor Anthony Burns

Leader, St Helens Council

Councillor Paul Stuart

Leader, Wirral Council

Emily Spurrell (non-voting member)

Police and Crime Commissioner

David Meyerowitz (non-voting member)

**Chair, Business and
Enterprise Board**

Councillor Ian Maher served
as the member for Sefton until
January 2024

| PORTFOLIOS | POLICY LEAD |
|---|----------------------------|
| Net-Zero | Councillor Anthony Burns |
| Innovation | Councillor Liam Robinson |
| Employment, Education and Skills | Councillor Marion Atkinson |
| Housing and Regeneration | Councillor Graham Morgan |
| Business, Investment and Trade | Councillor Mike Wharton |
| Transport and Policy, Resources and Reform | Mayor Steve Rotheram |
| Health and Inequalities | Councillor Paul Stuart |

Deputy Cabinet members

During 2023-24 and continuing for 2024-25 are:

| PORTFOLIOS | POLICY LEAD |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Policy, Reform and Resources | Councillor Carla Thomas |
| Education and Skills | Councillor Shelley Powell |
| Innovation | Councillor Portia Fahey |
| Net Zero | Councillor Gill Wood |
| Transport | TBC |
| Housing and Regeneration | Councillor Paulette Lappin |
| Health | Councillor Sharon Thornton |
| Business, Investment and Trade | Councillor Kate Groucutt |



METRO MAYOR
LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

