



The Prince's  
Responsible  
Business Network



# BRADFORD DISTRICT PROSPECTUS 2024-2040

**THIS IS OUR TIME  
THIS IS OUR PLACE  
THIS IS OUR HOME**

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# FOREWORD

## YOUNG, DIVERSE, AMBITIOUS

Bradford is the youngest city in the UK. Our people make Bradford unique, with over 150 languages spoken. A designated 'City of Sanctuary', Bradford has tangible wealth and has built a successful foundation of cultural inclusion and diversity. In 2025, as UK City of Culture, Bradford will welcome many more tourists, professionals, and partners who will come together to celebrate our shared cultural variety, from the paintings of David Hockney to a thriving range of creativity from people with South Asian heritage.

Since 2021, leaders from Bradford Council, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, businesses, education, and the voluntary sector have been working together to reflect on ways in which Bradford District is changing. Together, they are seeking to understand and harness the efforts of cross-sector partners to make life better for people across the District.

Bradford has a significant opportunity to help its people and communities demonstrate and accelerate their expertise, passions, and skills, to pioneer a route towards a city that is inclusive, safe and well-prepared for the economic and environmental challenges of the coming decades. This Prospectus captures some of the many ways that Bradford can unlock its potential when its partners and leaders work together for everyone's long-term wellbeing.

## CREATING SPACE FOR INNOVATION AND GROWTH

Bradford's Council, community leaders and businesses are acutely aware of the challenges facing many people and are determined to prevent them from intensifying further. The foundation of a fairer, safer, more prosperous Bradford must come through equitable economic growth that keeps pace with our growing population.

Many neighbourhoods across Bradford, including Keighley, are classified as some of the most disadvantaged in the UK. Access to good jobs and quality education can feel out of reach for many people. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the current cost-of-living crisis have exacerbated inequalities and continue to have a strong impact on the everyday wellbeing and ability to participate of too many of our people and families. We believe that by testing new approaches to addressing social mobility in a targeted way in Keighley, we will achieve change at the local level that can inform positive transformation in other wards.

Bradford District is home to many people, communities, and organisations that are ambitious and visionary. That is why now is a crucial time for Bradford's businesses, healthcare providers, schools, and other social support organisations to work together, to support each other, and to make good on shared commitments to create a brighter future in which everyone can participate.

We need to work in unison to promote and celebrate Bradford District's unique strengths in its urban and rural heartlands, helping to drive significant green and sustainable job creation. We must connect more deeply and efficiently with our neighbouring city economies, so that more of our people can benefit from the opportunities on their doorstep, and our neighbours can more easily access our own vibrant communities and young workforce.

Most of all, we must capitalise on the capacity, expertise, and resource of the UK Government and other national agencies so that we can make the most of our centrality to the Northern economy and secure a valuable legacy for our selection as 2025 UK City of Culture.

Here we have set out key asks that will help new and existing partners to care for our communities, to help young people build skills that enable them to take their first steps into the world of work, and to protect and strengthen our natural ecosystems. We are proud to present some of the inspiring progress that is being driven every day by dedicated organisations across the District and invite you and your teams to be part of Bradford's dynamic, entrepreneurial, and inclusive future.

*"We are committed to working together to build a Bradford District that people, whoever they are and wherever they live, are proud to call home. Where everyone has a stake in the future, the economy thrives, culture is exhilarating, and diversity is valued and celebrated."*

**Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe – Leader, City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council**

**Mayor Tracy Brabin – Mayor of West Yorkshire**

**Sir David Wootton – Chair, Bradford Place Programme Board**

## KEY ASK OF GOVERNMENT

Build on the positive recent announcement that the Department for Transport will reassess rail connectivity in the North and the Midlands, by supporting the development of a master plan for the creation of a new rail station for Bradford.

Together with the Integrated Rail Plan, this will enhance connectivity from East-West to Leeds and across the North, Manchester, the East Midlands and London. Bradford is ready to build on positive announcements from the UK Government to ensure that the district can harness its full potential.

Critically, network improvements should build on other recent positive announcements – such as the Long-Term Plan for Towns announced in 2023, and investment in infrastructure announced in the 2024 Spring Budget – to stimulate inward investment and place-based transformation of the Southern Gateway. At 120ha, this area is comparable in size to London Kings Cross redevelopment, an opportunity being developed collaboratively with Homes England and West Yorkshire Combined Authority. Improving rail capacity in and around Bradford can also drive a positive impact on carbon reduction, particularly if it supports more freight to travel by rail than by HGVs.

To reap transformative change, connectivity needs to be improved to more than just Leeds. Given its location and relative lack of recent investment, Bradford has the most to gain through being served by stronger rail connections. As we approach the 2025 City of Culture year, now is the time to cement its legacy by truly levelling up, growing investment, productivity and social inclusion.

Radical change to investment in connectivity, both physical and digital, is the missing key to unlock Bradford's full potential.

# OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

## ECONOMY

### Primary objective

Ensure the district's Gross Value Added (GVA) grows by over 30% by 2040.

To achieve this, we will work to champion Bradford's position as a renowned hub of cultural, digital, green, finance, life science, manufacturing and wider scientific excellence, nurturing innovation and entrepreneurial talent.

### Supporting objectives

- Build on Bradford's existing reputation as a leading centre of business via the creation of a new 'Business Hub', in partnership with educators and businesses to make it the best place to start a business in the UK.
- Deliver on the UK Government's West Yorkshire Investment Zone announcement, including significant investment to develop Bradford South and the Southern Gateway, also maximising the potential offered by the UK Government's Long-Term Plan for Towns and pledge of investment in Bradford's infrastructure in the 2024 Spring Budget.

### Key outcomes by 2040

- Over 10,000 new jobs will be created in Bradford by 2040. A focus on harnessing the expertise and resources of businesses will provide inclusive advice, engagement, mentoring and

training that equips local people with essential and technical skills.

- Bradford will secure inward investment funding of at least £500m, including £80m over five years by 2030 for targeted regeneration.
- By 2040, Bradford will become home to more innovative start-ups per capita than anywhere in the UK.

## CONNECTIVITY

### Primary objective

Support the Department for Transport in its work with Bradford Council and West Yorkshire Combined Authority to develop a master plan for the creation of a new rail station for Bradford.

This will underpin other work to increase access to quality, useable, sustainable public transport and high-speed broadband within Bradford and with other cities and regions.

### Supporting objectives

- Secure governmental focus and support to see through construction of a new rail station in Bradford, capitalising on the potential offered by the UK Government's Long-Term Plan for Towns and announcement of infrastructure funding for Bradford in the 2024 Spring Budget.

- Work cross-region to deliver more integrated and inclusive mass transit and more sustainable journeys.
- Support Bradford's Digital Plan to secure business investment and deliver a truly 'Connected District'.
- Improve other mass transport connections for Bradford, supporting all partners to deliver on pledges of infrastructure improvement.

### **Key outcomes by 2040**

- Deliver the first phases of West Yorkshire Mass Transit.
- Achieve affordable 100% full-fibre digital connectivity district-wide by 2027.
- Ensure physical and digital connectivity supports local people to access more opportunities for employment and skills development.
- Make our district more attractive and more accessible for visitors, new residents, and new employers.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **Primary objective**

Transition Bradford to Net Zero by 2040.

We will do this by prioritising affordable energy, ecological resilience, inclusive urban development, the creation of green jobs, and stewardship of the district's natural assets.

### **Supporting objectives**

- Establish a Centre of Excellence and Green Hub, supporting sustainable practice and innovation in local businesses.
- Modernise our industrial heartland by supporting renewable infrastructure on new and existing developments.
- Support community-led initiatives with funding and business expertise.

### **Key outcomes by 2040**

- Deliver energy efficiency and heat system retrofits for 150,000 homes in Bradford.
- Secure investment in a new low/no-carbon district heating system, helping to decarbonise and reduce costs.
- Support a substantial food production industry in close proximity to the local population.
- Complete a review of planning policy to consider surface water management and improve the condition of local rivers and waterways.

# OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

## SOCIAL MOBILITY

### Primary objective

Reduce levels of poverty and inequality in Bradford.

To enable this, we will test and learn from approaches in Keighley and other neighbourhoods that can be replicated district-wide.

### Supporting objectives

- Sustain a formal partnership between Bradford's schools, colleges, and key partners under the remit of the Education Alliance for Life Chances (EALC).
- Establish a social mobility Leadership Group in Keighley to increase literacy levels, wider skills, and support new employment, education, enterprise and volunteering opportunities.

### Key outcomes by 2040

- Increase the proportion of people across Bradford District with qualifications at NVQ Level 3+ from 43% to 55%.
- Improve key deprivation statistics in Keighley, including for levels of child poverty to fall below the West Yorkshire average.

## CULTURE

### Long-term objective

Secure a successful legacy for the City of Culture 2025 programme, resulting in sustainable job creation within the creative sector, more tourism, and positive awareness of the district.

### Supporting objectives

- Increase investment per capita in Bradford's creative, arts, and cultural sectors to match other major English cities.
- Ensure Bradford's key leisure attractions are fit for purpose for 2025 to drive visitor numbers and spend.
- Back the Bradford City of Culture 2025 plan to secure a potent legacy.

### Key outcomes by 2040

- Support the creation of 3,000 jobs in the district's arts, creative, and heritage sectors.
- Ensure equity of access and support long-term partnerships that deliver a sustained increase in participation in creative, arts and cultural activities district-wide.
- Drive growth of 20% in tourism incomes as a legacy of City of Culture 2025 and increase tourism investment through a highly effective destination marketing organisation.





# INTRODUCING BRADFORD

Bradford is the fifth largest metropolitan district in the UK, home to more than half a million people. It is the UK's youngest city, with 22.8% of people aged 15 or under. The district is governed by the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council at a local level and is part of the Mayoral West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

Bradford has historically been a northern powerhouse, becoming the centre of the wool trade by the nineteenth century. In recognition of this, the foundation stone for the iconic Wool Exchange in Little Germany was laid by the Prime Minister at the time, Lord Palmerston, in 1864. Bradford has a strong tradition of social innovation – including being one of the first UK cities to offer school meals and nursery education – that continues today.

Modern Bradford has a very successful manufacturing industry, making everything from soap to escalators to parts for the aeronautical industry. Moving with the times, individual businesses have succeeded in reinventing and repurposing their provision and continue in this vein with the advent of AI and robotics.

As the undisputed 'Curry Capital' of the UK, the thriving food industry has its roots in post-war migration by people with South Asian heritage. Bradford is home to Mumtaz, Aagrah, Akbar's and My Lahore, along with a host of B2B businesses, meaning our food industry is always open to newcomers.

The University of Bradford, a world leader on circular economy, computer science, and applied artificial intelligence, hosts 10,000 students annually and is committed to social inclusion, topping the Social Mobility Index for English universities for the last three years. Bradford has recently become the 'Applied AI capital of the UK' having received a £3.4m donation from one of its alumni to provide scholarships for the most deprived students. At the cutting edge of innovation, Bradford now has the most applied artificial intelligence and data analytics students in the UK.

Three enterprise zones will support the advanced manufacturing and logistics sectors. Sums of £33m and £25m have been awarded to the Keighley and Shipley Towns Funds respectively, with a further £20m announced for Keighley as part of the government's Long-Term Plan for Towns in September 2023. A number of key regeneration projects are underway in Bradford, including:

- The New Darley Street Market due to open in 2024: a sustainable 4,000 sq m market hall and green space.
- One City Park: comprising grade-A city centre office space, due to open in 2024.
- Bradford Live: a new 4,000-seater arts venue, housed in a former cinema and theatre disused for almost two decades.

- City Village development: including 1,000 new homes in and around the city centre.

Having won the bid for the UK City of Culture 2025, the scene is set for Bradford to capitalise on its cultural collateral. This unique opportunity will drive greater participation across the district and put arts, entertainment and musical expression at the heart of all communities. This is the chance for more people and communities in Bradford to tell their story.



# A VISION FOR BRADFORD'S FUTURE

## CREATING A DISTRICT EVERYONE CAN BE PART OF

Bradford's future will be defined and shaped by its diversity and its status as the UK's youngest city. By 2040, it will be recognised as pioneering in empowering and listening to the voices of the young, nurturing a new generation of leaders. Its established businesses will lead the way in working alongside local families and communities to provide accessible jobs created for them. Bradford will become known as the best place in the UK to establish a new business, providing a safe and welcome space that supports the vibrancy of its social entrepreneurs and innovators. It will also become better known as a place to participate in leading arts, culture, indoor and nature-based leisure.

We will build on our manufacturing heritage by continuing to innovate in response to the climate change agenda, harnessing the district's diverse ecology and building greener, more effective connections with rural residents. A new space and satellite facility in Keighley, and an accelerator-style sustainable business hub, will act as a focus to train local people in the skills needed for a Net Zero future.

The Bradford District will be known as best-in-class for supporting learners and entrepreneurs to commercialise their expertise sustainably and ethically. Bradford will be well connected digitally and through its infrastructure, linking it to other pivotal cities in the North and across the UK, drawing new investment, creating new jobs, and building a city everyone can be part of.

## GIVING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE THE BEST START

As UK City of Culture 2025, Bradford will celebrate its architecture, cultural variety and creative people. The legacy of this bid can be transformative across the district helping people from every community to participate and belong. Our local festivals in places such as Ilkley, Keighley and Saltaire (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), alongside the Bradford Literature Festival, and the much-loved Keighley and Worth Valley Railway will gain us international recognition. The Alhambra, North Parade, Bradford Live and Exchange Arts Centre will all contribute to rejuvenating our 24-hour economy. The recently announced Brit School North will also help to inspire and train a new generation of creatives and performers.

We will work together with public, private, and voluntary sector leaders to ensure our children have the best start in life. We will drive continuous improvements to the health and wellbeing of local people, pioneering leading approaches to adapting and building housing and energy networks that are fit for the future and an inspiration for other cities. We will support more people to spend more time in nature, access green spaces and build lifelong skills.

Our young people will have the confidence and ability to seize the opportunities of the future and lead long, happy and productive lives. Everyone in the Bradford District will feel part of a safe, supportive, and exciting community that takes pride in the social, natural, and cultural assets that make it a creative and supportive place to live, work and visit.

## NEXT STEPS

This prospectus is the latest step in our journey to 2040. It outlines our ambitions for Bradford, and key asks for business leaders, local, regional and national government.

We could not have got to this stage without the support of existing partners, both in and outside of the district and hope that new supporters will join us on our journey to support Bradford in realising its full potential.

The document outlines some of the problems facing communities in the district, our vision for change and how we feel we can bring about a difference which will be felt by communities both now and in the future.

We have set our sights on achieving our initial aims by 2040 and have identified measurable interventions within each chapter that businesses can support with.

We have used our knowledge of the problems occurring locally to identify key asks of regional and national government, as well as local and national businesses, all aligned with our overall vision for Bradford's future.

We hope our current supporters will continue with us on this journey and that new businesses, both local and national, will join us as we work towards building a better future for communities in Bradford.

# ECONOMY

## OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS TO ACCELERATE BRADFORD'S ECONOMY

### Primary objective

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and the Southern Gateway, also maximising the potential offered by the UK Government's Long-Term Plan for Towns and pledge of investment in Bradford's infrastructure in the 2024 Spring Budget.

### Key outcomes by 2040

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- Bradford will secure inward investment funding of at least £500m, including £80m over five years by 2030 for targeted regeneration.
- By 2040, Bradford will become home to more innovative start-ups per capita than anywhere in the UK.



# ECONOMY

## ASKS OF GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS

To help Bradford's economy grow equitably and fairly and propel it to become one of the most entrepreneurial cities in the UK, the public and private sector must work in tandem to create an enabling environment for business sustainability and job creation.

- **Fund developments to turbocharge Bradford's economy and business ecosystem**

**National and local business partners** are asked to provide significant wraparound support, mentoring, training, and advocacy over 10 years to make existing 'Business Hub' plans a reality. The Hub will improve the business support ecosystem, attract inward investment, and align with the UK Government's 'Help to Grow' initiative. These measures will help to reduce insolvencies, protect and create jobs, and boost regional GDP by continually championing the investment case for Bradford.

- **Invest in Bradford as a cost-effective business hub, with a young, vibrant workforce**

**The Government, Bradford Council, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, and key corporate partners** are asked to seriously consider Bradford's potential as a district in which the most important industries can thrive. An increase in major employers operating in Bradford will help champion the district and help to unlock local and regional talent. See below for an example of how PwC has taken this step.

- **Improve equitable access to procurement contracts for Bradford's diverse businesses**

**Government departments active in Bradford are asked to work with Bradford Council and West Yorkshire Combined Authority and major employers** to build on existing positive steps to help diverse

### PwC: Investing in Bradford's Future

Leading professional services firm PwC is part of a range of key partners investing in Bradford's people, infrastructure, office space, and business facilities. Involved in Bradford since 2017, PwC opened an office here in 2019 and has since tripled its employee numbers locally to 180 people. An additional 300 people are expected to join its teams when it takes 27,000 sq ft as anchor tenant of the new £35m One City Park development in Bradford's business quarter, due to open in Summer 2024. Demonstrating its commitment to employer-led social mobility, PwC ranked first in the Social Mobility Foundation's Employer Index 2023.



businesses access procurement contracts. This requires training and resources to help Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other Ethnically Diverse businesses access preferred supplier lists, win public procurement contracts, and secure growing inclusion in the supply chains of major projects. This work can build on the UK Government's new Procurement Act, expected to take effect in Autumn 2024.

- **Maximise the potential of Bradford's new Investment and Enterprise Zones**

**Key corporate partners** are asked to harness the potential of the recently announced Investment Zone for West Yorkshire. Establishment of a new Taskforce for Business Acceleration will ensure that relevant government departments, Bradford Council, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, educators, and industry leaders can add significant value and help empower the district's future economic development.



# ECONOMY

## THE OPPORTUNITY

Bradford possesses the opportunity to leverage its significant past as a dominant force during the Industrial Revolution and become reinvigorated as an economic powerhouse. The district is blessed with dynamic and diverse entrepreneurs, committed education providers, and access to established and productive supply chains, all of which must be supported to help accelerate economic growth.

Bradford is also home to a diverse range of industries, with major businesses such as Arris, Hallmark Cards, Morrison's, Yorkshire Building Society and Yorkshire Water headquartered in the district. Bradford is home to over 16,000 businesses, employing around 250,000 people. Recent decades have seen significant investments in the city centre, creating new jobs whilst securing the future of key cultural amenities. Development of the West Yorkshire Investment Zone is underway, bringing significant funding and support for the digital, tech, and health sectors.

Prior to the pandemic, Bradford's economy grew by 16% over five years to 2019. Harnessing the expertise and economic influence of Bradford's businesses is crucial to unlocking greater growth - NatWest's recent Time to Change report suggests that the contribution to GVA by businesses owned by Black, Asian, Mixed

Race and other Ethnically Diverse communities could grow fourfold with transformed support.

The Bradford Economic Partnership, chaired by Manoj Joshi DL, emphasises the district's young, diverse population as a key opportunity. We must ensure changes are made now to support their future, securing sustainable economic growth, and providing good, accessible jobs. Accessible skills, employment and education opportunities for all – underpinned by WYCA's Fair Work Charter - are essential to help ensure Bradford can secure wider socioeconomic and wellbeing benefits.

Bradford's young, diverse, and skilled workforce, cultural variety, and central location in the North, all contribute to it being listed as one of the top 20 cities for business growth by the Sunday Times in 2020. Bradford has a thriving digital sector, with 800 businesses employing 3,500 people, and strengths in advanced engineering, chemicals, automotive components, and food manufacturing alongside financial services and digital technologies.

With 1,200 manufacturing businesses employing 24,000 people, Bradford has the fifth highest percentage of manufacturing employment of any city in the UK. Their success is critical to

Bradford's future and can be bolstered with the ongoing support of the West Yorkshire Manufacturing Task Force. Our cultural and historical assets provide strong momentum for future growth - from the National Science and Media Museum, to our status as the world's first UNESCO City of Film. There is plenty to attract inbound investment and retain young local talent.



## THE CHALLENGE

The most recent unemployment figures for Bradford, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on 18 April 2023, show that 22,640 people (6.7% of the working age population) were claiming unemployment benefit in March 2023, with high proportions aged 18-24 and 50+. The claimant rates for the wider Leeds City Region and Yorkshire and the Humber were lower at 4.2%, against a UK average of 3.7%.

The 2019 English Indices of Deprivation show that the district is ranked as the fifth most income deprived and the sixth most employment deprived local authority in England. Overall, Bradford District ranked as the 13th most deprived local authority in England (out of 317), an increase of six places since the previous publication of such data in 2015.

At the time, even before the intense challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and ensuing cost-of-living crisis, 15% of the district's households lived in fuel poverty; one-third of children lived below the poverty line; 13% of the working age population had no qualifications; a lack of available, suitable homes contributed to 10% of households living in overcrowded conditions.

Connectivity and transport challenges at times raise barriers for

# ECONOMY

local people to access roles with major employers, which partly explains Bradford's economic growth and competitiveness fall behind its West Yorkshire counterpart, Leeds. These issues, as well as wider challenges in accessing support and advice, can also serve to hinder entrepreneurialism and leadership by Bradford's diverse communities. The district has long suffered from young people being enticed to pursue opportunities in other locations. Employers in the district must show leadership by creating inclusive and accessible opportunities for all of Bradford's communities to learn and earn.

The district's economic future is also influenced by UK macroeconomics. EY's Regional Economic Forecast 2023 shows West Yorkshire's economic output is forecast to decline by 10% by 2036, unless the UK's North-South imbalances in investment are addressed.

The most recent Experian Regional Econometric Model forecasts show that the district's GVA is set to grow by 32% by 2042. However, to achieve this growth, Bradford must attract inward investment, with businesses, education providers, community groups and social support systems working in tandem.

The pandemic and cost-of-living crisis have caused significant challenges to deprived wards such as Manningham, Tong, and Keighley and disproportionate health and wellbeing impact on people from Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other Ethnically Diverse communities. These are key headwinds that may prevent or slow the green economic growth required to retain talent and build a brighter future.



# CURRENT STRATEGY

Bradford's strong and diverse Economic Partnership, alongside key local and regional stakeholders, is committed to upskilling local people and revamping the district's physical assets, infrastructure, transportation and business premises.

Potentially transformative opportunities are present in critical sectors across the district. Furthermore, climate adaptation and a sustainable transition to Net Zero present additional opportunities for partnerships between civic, business and community leaders. These can help to promote apprenticeships, improve educational outcomes, and create pathways to employment for younger people, and all working-age adults.

There are concrete opportunities to ensure Bradford's leading industries and world-class research institutions drive economic growth over the coming decades.

The University of Bradford, alongside Bradford Council and West Yorkshire Combined Authority, are taking a focused approach on key regional sectors such as:

- Satellite/RF: leveraging the University of Bradford's new Centre for Space Artificial Intelligence and Space Hub Yorkshire to promote innovation in the satellite systems engineering sector.

- Life Sciences/Healthtech: additional support for Born in Bradford to develop this sector.
- Financial services: collaborating with ethical investment firms such as Yorkshire BS, Skipton BS, Ecology BS, and FinTech companies.
- Chemical/pharmaceuticals: championing the sector via a regional initiative.
- Culture – maximising the potential of Bradford's heritage, arts, and cultural organisations as part of the legacy of City of Culture 2025.
- Computer Science and AI – maximising the University of Bradford's field leadership – with the largest number of students studying applied AI in the UK – and tapping into regional expertise in quantum computing which is linked to the satellite, cyber, and communications sectors.
- Geoscience/Green industries - connecting stakeholders in healthtech, clean energy, satellite Earth Observatory data, flood modelling (including with JBA in Skipton, which is world-class) to develop a smart city ecosystem.

Other key initiatives designed to boost Bradford's economy and widen access to skilled employment include:

# ECONOMY

## Future Transformation

Focused on closing skills gaps through science, and with a vision of Bradford in 2040 that positions the city as an innovation hub, Future Transformation has worked with over 45,000 students in Bradford (20% of all students), to bridge the science skills gap. A key focus supports women and girls into STEM subjects and careers.

## Bradford District Business Hub

Proposed by the Bradford Economic Partnership, this initiative seeks to streamline business support for start-ups and SMEs by consolidating resources into a single entity named the 'Bradford District Business Hub.' The Hub will work in collaboration with the Federation of Small Businesses, Chamber of Commerce and other business leaders to test subsidised membership packages for SMEs, helping to promote their sustainability and growth. The University of Bradford launched a donor funded Enterprise Ecosystem in January 2024, further strengthening the support available to the district's businesses. By working together with communities and education providers the district's small and large businesses can improve their skills and employability offerings, reaching more of Bradford's diverse communities.

## Bradford Digital Strategy

Designed to support the social and economic development of the Bradford District in a sustainable way, this initiative aims to achieve whole district coverage of affordable gigabit capable broadband connectivity, equipping people with essential skills, and achieving



faster-than-average economic growth by 2027. The AI for Bradford - AI Innovation Partnership works to drive economic growth, improve competitiveness, and foster business innovation. Key budget highlights include a £100m+ investment in digital connectivity, a £2.5m investment in smart city platform capability, and a £5m five-year capital programme.

Bradford Council's support for Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other Ethnically Diverse-owned businesses in accessing procurement contracts.

Bradford Council is committed to supporting businesses in accessing procurement contracts. It provides advice and support to integrate businesses into supply chains, access Preferred Supplier Lists (PSL) and win public procurement contracts. To ensure strong engagement and the inclusion of Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other Ethnically Diverse businesses in accessing major funders, Invest in Bradford works with the WYCA Enterprise Partnership and hosts regular events to access funding opportunities, and promote Bradford to investors.

*"After 17 years of hard work, I have finally achieved the current state of my business. Had I been able to connect with individuals in similar positions to mine from the beginning, I believe I could have attained the same level of growth within just a few years."*

**Nasar Hussain, founder and managing director of Bradford-based business communications specialists ITC**

# CONNECTIVITY

## OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS TO MAKE BRADFORD A TRULY CONNECTED DISTRICT

### Primary objective

Support the Department for Transport in its work with Bradford Council and West Yorkshire Combined Authority to develop a master plan for the creation of a new rail station for Bradford.

This will underpin other work to increase access to quality, useable, sustainable public transport and high-speed broadband within Bradford and with other cities and regions.

### Supporting objectives

- Secure government focus and support to see through construction of new rail station in Bradford, capitalising on the potential offered by the UK Government's Long-Term Plan for Towns and announcement of infrastructure funding for Bradford in the 2024 Spring Budget.

- Work cross-region to deliver more integrated and inclusive mass transit and more sustainable journeys.
- Support Bradford's Digital Plan to secure business investment and deliver a truly 'Connected District'.
- Improve other mass transport connections for Bradford, supporting all partners to deliver on pledges to infrastructure improvement.
- Make our district more attractive and more accessible for visitors, new residents, and new employers.

### Key outcomes by 2040

- Deliver first phases of West Yorkshire Mass Transit.
- Achieve affordable 100% full-fibre digital connectivity district-wide by 2027.
- Ensure physical and digital connectivity supports local people to access more opportunities for employment and skills development.





# CONNECTIVITY

## ASKS OF GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS

Set in the context of Bradford's own Transport Connectivity studies and research, many of the key asks to deliver such transformative change against the challenges are already known:

### **Deliver Bradford's new rail station and invest in regional transit capacity through the Integrated Rail Plan**

**The Department for Transport, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, and Bradford Council** are asked to develop and deliver the master plan for the construction of a new rail station for Bradford. Given its location, Bradford has the most to gain through being served by improvements to integrated rail. Now is the time to equip the district to make good on its potential so that it can grow investment, opportunity, productivity and social inclusion that builds on the 2025 City of Culture legacy.

This is essential to enhance connectivity from East-West, as part of the Integrated Rail Plan whilst stimulating inward investment and place-based transformation of the Southern Gateway, as part of collaborative regeneration working with Homes England and West Yorkshire's Strategic Place Partnership. The opportunity should be seized to capitalise on both Transpennine corridors. We support the delivery of the new connections from Huddersfield to Bradford, as proposed by Network North, and we encourage early electrification of the Calder Valley rail corridor to secure early benefits for the new station.

Improved access to Manchester and the East Midlands is crucial in driving economic growth and social inclusion by attracting inward investment and helping Bradford meet its 2040 Vision. Improving rail capacity in and around the district can also drive a positive impact on carbon reduction,

encouraging more freight to travel by rail than by HGVs.

### **Commit to Mass Transit delivery across West Yorkshire**

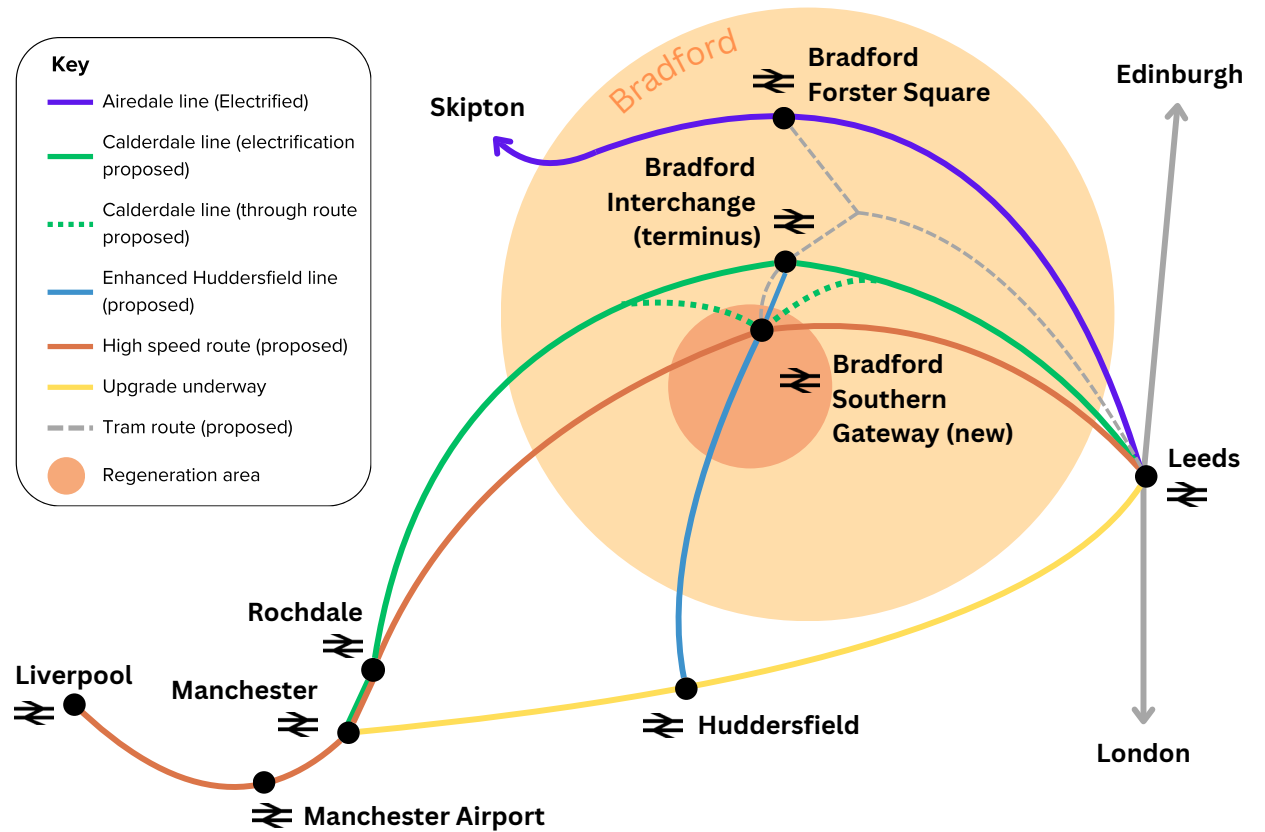
West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Bradford Council, and relevant Government departments are asked to prioritise local and regional connectivity. This includes multiple lines to and through Bradford to enhance and integrate rail station delivery. To sustain the legacy of City of Culture 2025, it is critical that locally devolved City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements and active travel programmes continue to be delivered, alongside bus reform and future mobility initiatives, creating affordable, sustainable accessibility for all. This supports Levelling Up and Town Deal delivery, which promotes improved quality of life throughout Bradford. The mayor's decision in Spring 2024 on the future of bus

reform will be a catalyst for local connectivity in Bradford. The opportunity must be seized to secure the affordable, integrated transport that can transform travel horizons and opportunities for all.

### Deliver Full Fibre Broadband throughout Bradford by 2027

Large employers are asked to support digital inclusion initiatives and achieve 100% access. Research shows that Full Fibre could unlock £69m in business productivity and innovation, £40m in growth could be driven from new business start-ups and £136m could be added to the value of local homes.

### Bradford Proposed Rail Enhancements



# CONNECTIVITY

## THE OPPORTUNITY

Bradford as an ambitious and youthful city stands on the brink of transformation. Yet connectivity, both physical and digital, must improve if Bradford is to realise its potential for growth. Local people and communities need to be able to make the best of the opportunities on their doorstep. And whilst it has some of the largest commuter flows in the North (approx 40,000 per day Bradford - Leeds), most of these journeys are made by car.

This connectivity gap in transport reveals itself in critical social challenges such as inequity in health, education, life chances and opportunities. Poor physical connectivity extends into digital inclusion, access and unlocking wider socio-economic opportunity. Only 66% of Bradford has Full Fibre access. This is a significant deficit against other core cities in the UK and wider North, typically at 75%+ to enable us to unleash the potential of Bradford.

Alongside physical transport, fast and reliable data access and broadband is critical. From facilitating digital on-demand content, to supporting businesses taking their products or services to a national and international audience, transformation is vital to ensure that Bradford has a resilient and dynamic economy for years to come.

Despite comparative advantages in terms of its location at the centre of the North; its young, diverse population and workforce; active SME and cultural economy; leading universities; emerging AI and tech sector; and ambitious local leadership, productivity only stands at around 70% of the national average.

Radical change to investment in connectivity, both physical and digital, is a critical step to unlocking this gap and realising Bradford's full potential, providing a platform for green, productive, and socially inclusive growth for the future.

## THE CHALLENGE

Bradford is currently the UK's biggest city without a mainline rail station. It has an expensive and non-integrated public transport system with unreliable connections within and between the towns and cities that make up the wider district.

# CURRENT STRATEGY

## **A connected, entrepreneurial city**

As part of Bradford's Digital Plan, the Connected District is one of the four critical areas of delivery that aims to achieve 100% full-fibre gigabit capable connectivity district-wide, provide fixed wireless access for gigabit coverage in rural communities, establish the LoRaWAN network foundation for smart city growth, and create a digital work plan to support City of Culture 2025 celebration in Bradford.

## **Investment Zone and Integrated City connectivity**

Combining the above proposals with Investment Zone delivery will maximise Bradford's competitive advantage. Integrating transformative connectivity delivery with best practice and locally led ecosystem growth with anchor institutions, stimulated by existing world-class education and research assets, will provide a critical investment lever to unlock holistic and integrated opportunity.

The certainty that the government can provide to both public and private sectors to unlock both locally transformative and inward focused investment for the benefit of Bradford, the North and wider

UK plc in a locally led, place-based manner, is a critical lever for early deployment.

## **An advanced, enterprise economy**

Bradford is already at the centre of data innovation, AI and associated research. Supporting Digital Economy investment into ecosystems and local leadership will enhance support for start-ups and scale-ups through an entrepreneurship ecosystem support network, maximising the benefits of investments in physical infrastructure.

This will promote Bradford's strengths and secure FDI through targeted investment, establish an inclusive regional digital skills plan, and offer targeted support for the circular/green economy. This initiative includes the AI for Bradford - AI Innovation Partnership, which aims to work together in a public-private-academic partnership to drive economic growth, improve competitiveness, and foster innovation in Bradford businesses. The initiative's key budget highlights include a £100m+ investment in digital connectivity, a £2.5m investment in smart city platform capability, and a £5m five-year capital programme.

# ENVIRONMENT

## OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS TO CREATE A SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE FUTURE FOR BRADFORD

### Primary objective

Transition Bradford to Net Zero by 2040.

We will do this by prioritising affordable energy, ecological resilience, inclusive urban development, the creation of green jobs, and stewardship of the district's natural assets.

### Supporting objectives

- Establish a Centre of Excellence and Green Hub, supporting sustainable practice and innovation in local businesses.
- Modernise our industrial heartland by supporting renewable infrastructure on new and existing developments.
- Support community-led initiatives with funding and business expertise.

### Key outcomes by 2040

- Deliver energy efficiency and heat system retrofits for 150,000 homes in Bradford.
- Secure investment in a new low/no-carbon district heating system, helping to decarbonise and reduce costs.
- Support a substantial food production industry in close proximity to the local population.
- Complete a review of planning policy to consider surface water management and improve the condition of local rivers and waterways.



# ENVIRONMENT

## ASKS OF GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS

### **Promote greener skills, jobs and lives through a new 'Centre of Excellence' and 'Green Hub'**

**Relevant government departments, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Bradford Council and local employers** are asked to create a legacy for future generations to build and utilise their skills to support a sustainable future, building on WYCA's management of adult education across West Yorkshire. Further devolution of resources and powers to assist the development of green skills is essential to secure an economically and environmentally sustainable future for Bradford while developing and attracting more talent.

Establishing an industry-sponsored 'Centre of Excellence', co-hosted by the University of Bradford, and 'Green Hub', with the University's School of Management, will help local firms to collaborate and drive positive

change alongside local people. This should be underpinned by a thorough audit of existing and unmet skills needs, with Bradford's educational institutions helping to drive a growth in skills that can equip the district for a greener future.

### **Build the capacity of Bradford's Sustainable Development Partnership**

**West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Bradford Council, and major local employers** are asked to invest in Bradford's capability to stimulate innovation, measure impacts and deliver projects and interventions for sustainable development that can help bring lasting benefits to the district.

Funding of £5m until 2030 for a dedicated Programme Office will ensure Bradford can capitalise on the willingness of key partners to collaborate on sustainable workstreams.

Establishing the Sustainable Development Partnership as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation would bring governance and funding benefits, whilst helping a growing team build specialist local knowledge and collaborate with the University of Bradford through Knowledge Transfer Partnerships.

### **Modernise Bradford's manufacturing and industrial heartlands to build long-term resilience**

**Relevant government departments, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Bradford Council, and major local employers** are asked to prioritise and fund master planning of regional industrial decarbonisation by 2025.

Local businesses require support to develop collaborative energy systems and energy efficiency investment plans that reduce energy costs, deliver carbon reduction and



build resilience. Investing in lower cost renewable infrastructure – such as direct wire power and energy storage - can help Bradford future-proof its vital existing manufacturing industry and attract more inward investment. By 2025 we want Bradford’s businesses to have formulated investment cases to secure 25% of WYCA spend for manufacturing reinvestment.

### **Equip Bradford’s homes and neighbourhoods for an energy efficient future**

**Relevant government departments, Bradford Council, the Environment Agency, and property developers** are asked to create a heat network that stretches beyond the city centre and incorporates manufacturing clusters and multiple residential areas, adding both suppliers and users of heat. By 2033 we want to see a Bradford district that has

transformed 20% of housing stock – 30,000 dwellings – on a whole neighbourhood scale and a coordinated basis, using building fabric retrofits and new concept eco-housing. ‘Hard to treat’ building designs and types of tenure will be identified and supported, helping inclusion. Alongside energy efficiency, renewable energy infrastructure will be deployed in neighbourhoods. By 2050, these steps will help decarbonise every home.

### **Empower sustainable supply chains for Bradford’s food industry and other key sectors**

**Relevant government departments, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, and Bradford Council** are asked to ensure supply chains are agile and ready to provide the expertise, services and hardware for capital investment, satisfying

the needs of a Net Zero future.

Business leadership will step up to create a ‘Food Leadership Council’ ensuring that Bradford will be successful in following City of Culture 2025 with a growing ‘City of Food’ brand. This would facilitate inward investment and support local businesses taking a leading position in sustainable and healthy food supply chains regionally – a demonstration of strength from Bradford’s diversity.

### **Support a catchment approach to water management district-wide that embeds nature-based solutions**

**Relevant government departments, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, and Bradford Council** are asked to work alongside Yorkshire Water and other regional providers to review planning policy to consider surface water

# ENVIRONMENT

management, such as sustainable urban drainage and the use of 'green roofs' to catch water. These and other 'nature-based solutions' can be an essential mechanism for mitigating flood risk, to which the district is highly vulnerable.

Steps should also be taken to address pollution in Bradford's waterways (including Bradford Beck and Ilkley Bathing Waters), which are an essential part of our collective local ecology, and provide wider economic, social, and wellbeing benefits for residents and visitors alike.



## THE OPPORTUNITY

In 2021, the UK Government published a Net Zero Strategy that set out policies and proposals to decarbonise all sectors of the UK economy, so that it can meet Net Zero targets by 2050. This was updated in 2023. Academic and legislative scrutiny is being provided by the Climate Change Committee (CCC) to hold key stakeholders accountable.

Alongside UK-wide initiatives, Bradford's Council leaders have also publicly declared commitments to address the climate crisis. Progressing towards Net Zero, protecting local biodiversity, developing green skills, taking intentional action towards greater sustainability and creating a more circular economy are all major components that can help Bradford pioneer positive climate action. Recently announced government funding for the development of a state-of-the-art hydrogen production facility to deliver energy in the heart of Bradford is a significant step in the right direction.

The business community, alongside Bradford Council and the WYCA local authorities, see significant opportunities to make a sustainable, adaptable and green economy a key aspect of Bradford's future. There are major opportunities for combined, cross-sector initiatives to support climate positive action, such as creating more sustainable homes, developing a skills and training

infrastructure that creates greener jobs for the future, and supporting sustainable energy generation.

Bradford has unique assets, and two-thirds of the district is rural, providing a diverse ecological starting base to support nature stewardship. With a high proportion of businesses engaged in manufacturing and food production, there are opportunities to deliver swift and lasting sustainable change, while contributing to key economic indicators of gross value added and employment.



# ENVIRONMENT

## THE CHALLENGE

The task of significantly reducing carbon emissions is extremely challenging and requires swift and collaborative action to decarbonise all sectors. In the UK, the CCC's 2023 Progress Report suggests that while strategies and plans are in good health, tangible progress and delivery of measures to reduce emissions are lagging behind policy ambitions. Continuing with current norms and industrial activity is forecast to lead to potentially catastrophic warming and other challenges associated with climate change.

Many people and communities across the Bradford district are among those hardest hit by the challenges posed by climate change, which are likely to intensify and become more frequent in future. Major flooding in 2015, 2019 and 2021 impacted thousands of homes and businesses in the district. The heatwave of Summer 2022 also continued a long annual trend of Met Office health warnings associated with high temperatures. Adaptation of housing, council-owned and community buildings, and business premises is a significant challenge.

Businesses have been asked to take quicker and deeper action to reduce emissions, promote efficiency, and ensure ambitions are met within stated timescales. Major progress is needed across the Bradford district to support decarbonisation and to develop 'green'

skills that will be crucially relevant to adapt and adopt new practices and create necessary new jobs.

Bradford's diverse population, as well as people and families experiencing deprivation, must be consulted and engaged to ensure that environmental policy and practice does not disadvantage people who may already be struggling to manage the impacts of climate change and necessary adaptation.

Delivering a sustainable future for Bradford will require significant collaboration and coordination between different agencies, employers and the citizens of the district. A single voice is needed to make the best use of resources, to bring together external funding and to support and nurture innovation within the district and beyond. Despite challenging conditions, if the dangers and economic opportunities associated with climate change are addressed fairly and equitably, there is significant potential for Bradford to improve local lives and deliver a just transition to a Net Zero future.

## CURRENT STRATEGY

Bradford Council has invested over £300,000 in community climate action, supporting over 50 grass roots initiatives to support citizens, children and young people in addressing climate challenges. The aim of this approach was to achieve citizen participation through multiple small schemes. Further advancements, such as a Clean Air Zone for the North, sustainable development plans at Esholt, district-wide tree planting, planning for solar farms and moorland carbon sequestration are also underway. The other Councils within WYCA have also pledged financial and strategic support to adapt existing housing stock, improve air quality, boost the use of more sustainable public transportation and support climate positive business activity. Coordinated action is being taken by organisations within Bradford to address the climate crisis, but additional support to help them invest in programmes and training and effectively implement climate positive initiatives is needed.

Established in 2020, Bradford's Sustainable Development Partnership (SDP) brings together businesses, key organisations and local authorities to catalyse and accelerate the changes needed to move towards sustainable development. These are achieved through the work of member organisations of the Partnership. The SDP's areas of focus are pictured on the right.



# ENVIRONMENT

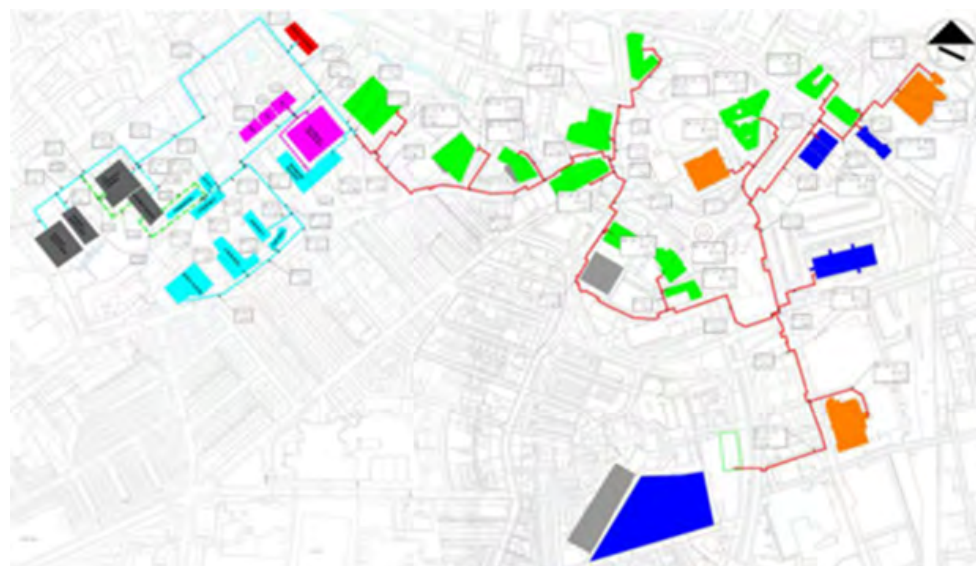
## **Retrofitting housing stock and developing green neighbourhood infrastructure**

Work is underway on developing pilots to demonstrate how the city and district's housing stock can be retrofitted or adapted to meet future needs. Close to the entire housing stock of over 150,000 homes in Bradford district requires an energy efficiency and heat system retrofit to embed renewable energy generation that cuts reliance on carbon-intensive heating.

In 2022, InCommunities, a not-for-profit organisation which manages over 23,000 homes across the district, began a project to insulate existing homes to sharply reduce the amount of heat lost. InCommunities maintains green spaces around its homes to improve biodiversity which has a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of their tenants. A model for trialling in each of Bradford's constituencies is scoped and ready for further development and implementation under the working title 'Neighbourhood Retrofit'. Meaningful community engagement is required to understand which homes are suitable for future adaptation efforts and to help ensure people can live healthy, happy lives while reducing their impact on local ecosystems. New developments, such as the recently confirmed Bradford Council, deal with the English Cities

Fund, Muse Places, and Homes England to build 1,000 homes in the heart of the city centre, are embedding infrastructure investment that supports green, traffic reduced streets and sustainable practice.

## **Investing in infrastructure that supports the transition to net zero**



In 2022, Bradford celebrated the success of private company 1energy in securing over £20m financial backing from the UK Government for the Bradford Energy Network. This would match the company's own planned investment in a city centre district heating system driven by Air Source Heat Pumps – the largest in the UK. These low/no carbon energy sources could form part of a wider district heating system that would be a vital 'no-regrets' infrastructure investment with huge socioeconomic benefits. 1energy has also collaborated with local businesses to help them to apply for separate government funding from the Salix fund for energy efficiency works on their buildings. The Bradford Energy concept and infrastructure allows for future expansion geographically, reaching the district's industrial sites and rural heartlands.

### **Decarbonising Bradford's manufacturing sector**

Manufacturing Futures is an initiative working with local manufacturing companies, the Council, WYCA and the University of Bradford planning a progressive, investible and collaborative approach to addressing Net Zero to bring about a sustainable, thriving manufacturing base for the coming decades. Since 2022 discussions have been underway with the UK Government (formerly

BEIS, now DESNZ) on support for a programme to engage local manufacturers within place-based 'clusters' of businesses in practical forums to share ideas, gain expert advice and create energy and decarbonisation master planning, all of which would support job creation. The Manufacturing Futures team is coordinating a bid for funding for creating a 'roadmap' for each cluster to transition to low/no-carbon energy and process materials.

### **Developing a sustainable food supply chain**

Recognising the vital importance of the food industry to Bradford's economy and long-term wellbeing, as well as the proximity of a productive agricultural hinterland to the heart of the city (60% of the district's area is arable/pastoral land) the SDP's vision is to ensure that growth and production of nutritious food that is accessible to all is at the heart of the district's policies and actions. An industry-specific example of this came in 2022, when many local agricultural businesses and other stakeholders engaged in research led by the University of Bradford to investigate the scale of lamb production. This assessed the potentially positive environmental impacts of more effective use of local supply chains and procurement, and engaged producers, butchers and farmers of Halal produce.

# ENVIRONMENT

Businesses engaged in this research noted the wider opportunity in developing accreditation requirements for creating a stronger 'farm to fork' Halal supply chain for lamb in the Bradford district. These findings could also be applied to other food subsectors, including retail through new developments such as Darley Street Market. The separate Green Street initiative, backed by the Retail Sector Council and Department for Business and Trade, is extending this work across independent retailers and hospitality businesses in the district by developing an innovative suite of tools and metrics.

Joining with Public Health, the SDP has facilitated setting up the Bradford Sustainable Food Partnership, which gained accreditation from the Sustainable Food Places network in 2022 and has attracted huge support across the health, voluntary and community services sectors. Together, we are ready to sustainably raise standards and help market Bradford as the 'City of Food'.

## **Convening leadership to support a positive climate transition**

Working with many of the UK's largest businesses, as well as local partners such as Yorkshire Water, Yorkshire Building Society and others, Business in the Community (BITC) works closely with cross-sector partners to provide holistic support and innovative solutions

to some of the risks associated with climate change. Currently under development is a £100m Community Climate Fund which will help tackle the cost-of-living crisis so that communities can thrive by increasing the scale and speed of community led climate action that creates tangible impact and builds resilience to future economic shocks. The fund will harness the power of the BITC responsible business network, bringing together their expertise on climate action and place-based transformation with the skills and expertise of their members to unlock opportunities for communities.





# SOCIAL MOBILITY

## OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS TO GIVE BRADFORD'S COMMUNITIES A FIGHTING CHANCE

### Primary objective

Reduce levels of poverty and inequality in Bradford.

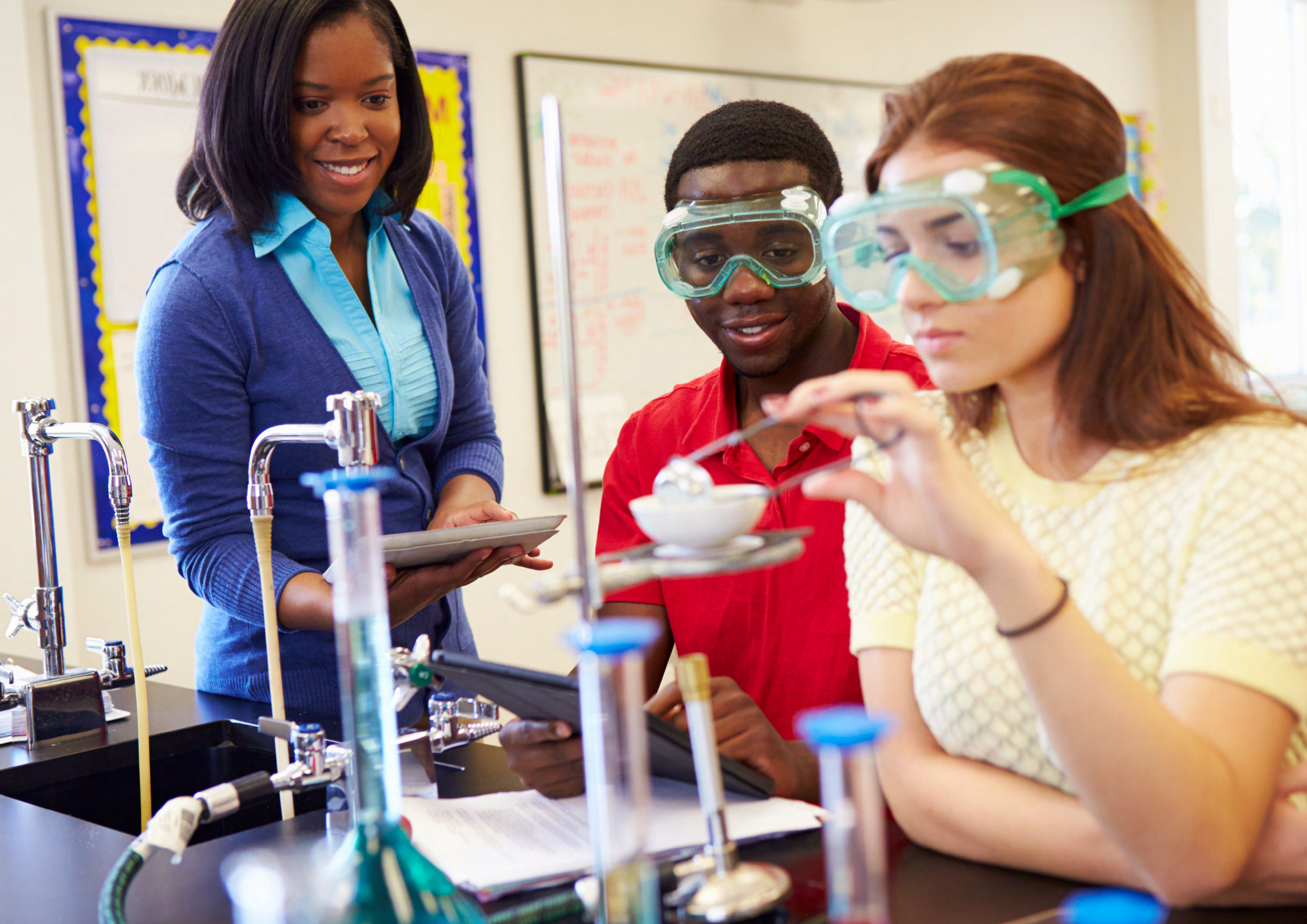
To enable this, we will test and learn from approaches in Keighley and other neighbourhoods that can be replicated district-wide.

### Supporting objectives

- Sustain a formal partnership between Bradford's schools, colleges, and key partners under the remit of the Education Alliance for Life Chances (EALC).
- Establish a social mobility Leadership Group in Keighley to increase literacy levels, wider skills, and support new employment, education, enterprise and volunteering opportunities.

### Key outcomes by 2040

- Increase the proportion of people across Bradford district with qualifications at NVQ Level 3+ from 43% to 55%.
- Improve key deprivation statistics in Keighley, including for levels of child poverty to fall below the West Yorkshire average.



# SOCIAL MOBILITY

## ASKS OF GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS

### **Establish clear accountability and authority, enabled by connected leadership**

**Bradford Council and West Yorkshire Combined Authority** are asked to establish a Senior Responsible Office for tackling inequality, driving change across a range of systems, liaising with multiple stakeholders and, where necessary, influencing the deployment of resources and people behind a strategic plan.

There is a need to establish a single, clear management chain, enabling good oversight of issues, accelerated decision making, and clarity of communication. A 'whole system' leadership must draw resources from all agencies, including health, social care, and policing. These resources must drive a truly multi-agency response within educational settings.

### **Fund educational settings so they can be a means of connecting with families and communities**

**Relevant government departments, Bradford Council, and West Yorkshire Combined Authority** are asked to support educational establishments to become accessible spaces at the heart of every child's community. They need to offer teachers – in partnership with professionals from other services – a route to engage with children and families, and offer support at the earliest opportunity, without taking vulnerable children into clinical or other non-routine spaces. Educators also need to be empowered to support career and life goals for young people, such as through use of the Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance.

### **Prioritise deprived localities**

**Relevant government departments, Bradford Council and West Yorkshire Combined Authority, and businesses investing in Bradford** are asked to direct resources to the localities, communities, and individuals in the most deprived areas, including Keighley. The provision of support to our most disadvantaged areas has already yielded dividends through the Department for Education's Opportunity Area initiative.

### **Use educational settings to initiate earlier interventions**

**Bradford Council and West Yorkshire Combined Authority** are asked to support by prioritising strong pupil and staff relationships in collaboration with parents and carers, so that teachers and early years professionals can address risks and

vulnerabilities, before these issues cross the desk of clinicians, social workers, and other professionals.

### **Make a reality of multi-agency working**

**Relevant agencies, Bradford Council, and West Yorkshire Combined Authority** are asked to ensure professionals on the frontline are given the freedom and support to connect and act together. This must involve removing ‘artificial’, non-legal barriers to information sharing that work against children’s best interests, and prevent joined-up wraparound support at key transition points in their lives. It is also vital to enable the pooling of budgets, targeting of criteria, and alignment of operational processes. We need to develop information sharing tools and build effective education centred partnerships at the local level, linking professionals and the

community. This will make a reality of effective multi-agency working.

### **Put research and development at the heart of strategy and delivery**

**Local education providers, relevant businesses, Bradford Council and West Yorkshire Combined Authority** are asked to ensure the breadth of academic expertise and capacity within universities is matched by the enthusiasm of researchers to engage with real challenges. Stakeholders need to be prepared to learn together, not just when implementing interventions, but on an ongoing basis. A shared culture, and a virtuous cycle of learning through evidence and practice has the potential to inform effective integrated practice that transforms life chances for Bradford’s children and young people.



# SOCIAL MOBILITY

## THE OPPORTUNITY

Bradford is able to model smarter place-based planning and delivery of services. Its businesses and entrepreneurs have much to offer in terms of meaningful and inclusive career advice and guidance to local children and families. Furthermore, the newly announced towns funding for Keighley provides a clear opportunity to test and learn from approaches to address social mobility in Keighley over the next ten years.

Bradford's Centre for Applied Education Research (CAER) has a global profile, leading ground-breaking research and innovative public policy. Home to the world's largest cohort study: Born in Bradford – Age of Wonder, Bradford is already generating evidence on factors affecting children's development, spanning health, education, care and environment. CAER is leading the way in supporting the roll-out of practices which are improving outcomes for children.

The Bradford Opportunity Area Programme (aimed at improving social mobility through investment in education) has achieved considerable success through its five years of delivery (2018 - 2022) but this progress needs sustaining, so that all children have the opportunity to make the best of their potential.

The newly formed EALC, taking on the legacy of the Opportunity

Area, working in Keighley and across the district seeks to create a formal partnership between schools, community organisations and the major anchor organisations within Bradford. The EALC vision is to support major public, social, and education organisations across Bradford to be capable of supporting evidence based multi-agency work with and through educational establishments to help children and young people secure good life chances and improve social mobility.

A community comprising the Universities of Leeds, York, Leeds Trinity and Bradford, CAER has the expertise to inform, model and evaluate innovative projects and to inform and model complex system change, underpinned by on the ground changes made by the EALC. The University of Bradford provides leading opportunities that boost social mobility, ranking first for the last three years for social mobility in the HEPI University Social Mobility Index. Our vision is that by 2040, children and young people in Bradford:

- Are living healthy, emotionally well-adjusted lives.
- Have equity of access to educational opportunities.
- Live in communities which are safe and thriving.
- Are not held back by needs relating to their health, learning, and economic situations.

## THE CHALLENGE

The challenges brought by childhood inequality in Bradford are huge in scale and have complex causes. In 2019, Bradford was ranked the 13th most deprived local authority in England and second most deprived in Yorkshire and Humber. Already low, Bradford's educational and health outcomes were made worse by the Covid-19 pandemic. Disadvantage and deprivation are deepening, creating wide gaps in learning and health outcomes between children living in different areas of our district. Children in the North are a third more likely to live in poverty than those in the rest of England (27% versus 20%), leading to worse physical and mental health outcomes, lower educational attainment, and lower lifelong economic productivity (57% more likely to live in an area with low-income families).

Many schools in Bradford have struggled to maintain high standards in the face of funding pressures and can at times find it hard to meet the needs of their catchment communities effectively. Out of Bradford's 266 schools and colleges assessed by Ofsted, there are a higher number currently rated 'Inadequate' or 'Requiring Improvement' (45), than there are rated as 'Outstanding' (30).

Over 400,000 (23.8%) people in Bradford experience high levels of

needs in advancing their numeracy skills, with the local authority the 52nd most in need of numeracy skills development in the UK. Though improved between 2020-2021, the proportion of 16- and 17-year-olds not in education, employment, or training in Bradford stands at 2.9%. Bradford also has higher levels of unemployment (4.8%) and economic inactivity (25.4%) than the UK averages (3.6% and 21.5% respectively).

Bradford's employees are also around 6% less likely to be employed in managerial, directorial, and professional occupations than the British average.

Behind these figures, which show challenges of education and employment attainment facing people of all ages in Bradford, are the young lives of our children and young people, individuals with the potential to achieve great things, and to change the world.

# SOCIAL MOBILITY

## CURRENT STRATEGY

Impacting on social mobility is a vital component of community-led transformation for the long-term. It is imperative that partner organisations in education, healthcare, social services, and other public provision can be supported with business expertise and coordinated collaboration to enhance their support for local people.

In Keighley, BITC is working to help connect local children and young people with new opportunities. These include a literacy taskforce focused on improving the reading capability of 11-year-olds by 20%; improving parent/family and community participation in local reading programmes and engaging corporate volunteers. We are also working closely with the EALC to improve dental health and wider healthy eating habits of primary age children.

In May 2023, we commissioned a public consultation in partnership with Bradford Council to give local young people the chance to have their say on the district's future, which included participants in Keighley.

Other initiatives underway or planned to support children and families in Keighley include:

- The creation of two social enterprises to support financial independence for survivors of domestic abuse.





- Creating a youth offering to steer young people away from crime by offering them safe environments to learn employability skills.
- Enjoining the support of corporate volunteers for essential charities and community organisations.
- Supporting career prospects for students at Keighley College.

### **Education Alliance for Life Chances and Centre for Applied Education Research**

The Alliance works together with their individual and collective connections towards a shared vision for every child in Bradford to have good life chances. The EALC commits to acting early, focusing on preventative approaches rather than treatment. This underpins a 20-year ambition to address divided life chances.

The EALC aims to champion a ‘lead by example’ ethos on the use of evidence informed decision-making, using connected data to influence the wider children’s governance arrangements to ensure they have the tools and insight to make evidence informed decisions. Importantly, EALC drives the work of the CAER, linking researchers to schools, health and families; designing and testing

new ways to identify and meet the needs of vulnerable children; taking advantage of schools’ unique place in family life.

All CAER research follows an ‘education translation pipeline’ beginning with fundamental research to design and test new ways to understand, identify and meet the needs of vulnerable children. Tools and interventions are translated through feasibility studies in a small number of schools before wider implementation. The efficacy of these research tools and interventions are evaluated through regional rollout.

Examples of other regional initiatives underway are outlined below:

### **Born in Bradford and Age of Wonder**

Born in Bradford (BiB) began as a longitudinal birth cohort study, and over the last ten years, the original cohort of 12,400 BiB parents and children have shared information through surveys and collection of routine data from health and education records. BiB worked with over 80 primary schools in Bradford to collect information on over 16,000 children.

This incredibly rich data set has laid the foundation for the work taking place within the CAER, allowing us to better understand the

# SOCIAL MOBILITY

factors influencing health, wellbeing and educational outcomes throughout development.

BiB has transitioned to now include multiple cohorts, with the children in the original birth cohort now entering adolescence. The newest phase of BiB, called BiB Age of Wonder (AoW), aims to follow 30,000 teenagers over seven years. AoW is following the original BiB cohort, and their peers through their adolescence and transition into adulthood; a period shaping life-long physical and mental health, cardiometabolic risk and inequalities. The research is co-produced with the young people, schools and services in the district, ensuring the most important and useful topics are covered during the questionnaires, health measurements and cognitive assessments in schools.

## **Data Science: the IDEA Centre and Connected Bradford**

We are living in an 'age of data', and it has already transformed our businesses and our media. It has the potential to transform, and level up, the life chances of citizens throughout the UK.

The IDEA Centre connects an inclusive community of researchers with the public, practitioners and policymakers to help improve public services through data science. Its aim is to co-produce

solutions to the priorities identified by their communities and stakeholders.

The Connected Bradford programme links anonymised routine electronic data in a database, spanning primary care, secondary care, community care and social care for over 600,000 people, and includes wider determinants of health, underpinning collaborative research.

## **Digital Education: Today, tomorrow and the future**

The Digital Makers programme combines a comprehensive programme of research and training that will equip schools with evidence-based knowledge to transform the digital education landscape and ensure school leavers are digitally literate, boosting future life chances. One of the world's largest ever co-produced computing education programmes, Digital Makers will engage every secondary school pupil in Bradford to ensure they have opportunities to participate in data science, including:

- Learning computer programming by the age of 18.
- Collecting, analysing and visualising their own data and data from large datasets (e.g. BiB).
- Experiencing immersive technologies and learning new skills.

- Co-designing summer programmes including interaction with world-class digital leaders.

This will catalyse the economic and human capital in the UK's youngest city to provide digital skills for life. Actions CAER are taking to support schools around digital education include:

- A Summer of Tech programme (alongside the National Science and Media Museum, Future Transformation and the Raspberry Pi Foundation) giving Year 6 and 7 pupils the opportunity to develop coding skills and learn about tech careers.
- Developing a place-based approach to extracurricular coding clubs in partnership with Raspberry Pi to ensure maximum uptake and retention of pupils in these programmes.

### **Unlocking the next generation of talent**

PwC supports the Bradford cluster of the Social Mobility Business Partnership scheme and has worked in the district since 2017, driving activity to remove barriers and broaden access to career opportunities. Its school's strategy offers activities to secondary school and college students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds to support skills development and raise aspirations.

In the academic year 2023/24, over 140 students from four Bradford schools attended PwC offices as part of its 'New World New Skills' programme. Local PwC colleagues also work as Enterprise Advisors, developing career strategies for students. Its annual volunteering day in 2023 hosted two skills sessions reaching 90 students. In the wider community, PwC runs the SUSTAIN partnership alongside Impact Hub Bradford, supporting organisations making a social impact.



# CULTURE

## OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS TO SECURE BRADFORD'S CULTURAL LEGACY BEYOND 2025

### Primary objective

Secure a successful legacy for the City of Culture 2025 programme, resulting in sustainable job creation within the creative sector, more tourism, and positive awareness of Bradford.

### Supporting objectives

- Level up investment per capita in Bradford's creative, arts and cultural sectors to match other major English cities.
- Ensure Bradford's key leisure attractions are fit for purpose for 2025 to drive visitor numbers and spend.
- Back the Bradford City of Culture 2025 plan to secure a potent legacy.

### Key outcomes by 2040

- Support the creation of 3,000 jobs in the district's arts, creative and heritage sectors.
- Ensure equity of access and support long-term partnerships that deliver a sustained increase in participation in creative, arts and cultural activities district-wide.
- Drive growth of 20% in tourism income as a legacy of City of Culture 2025.
- Increase tourism investment through a highly effective destination marketing organisation.



# CULTURE

## ASKS OF GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS

**Connect national agencies to bring additional inbound investment and support into Bradford, helping the district capitalise on its rich cultural heritage**

**Stimulate job creation by apportioning appropriate levels of funding and ensuring the long-term sustainability of Bradford's cultural organisations**

**Relevant government departments and West Yorkshire Combined Authority** are asked to provide opportunities to attract more funding into Bradford, whilst enticing more people with diverse skills and experience to bring strategic voluntary support to our community organisations. This can be underpinned by BITC's extensive network of skilled employees working with national and regional businesses.

**Ensure that support around culture and heritage is accessible to Bradford's diverse communities and young people**

**West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Bradford Council** are asked to support young people to engage with arts, culture, and heritage organisations to provide a much-needed diversifier for the local job market and improve outcomes for school-leavers. Local people should also be enabled to find information in their primary language, reducing barriers to entry for diverse groups and people experiencing deprivation.

**Ensure social, health, and housing agencies are signposted to cultural and arts activities as a means of mitigating levels of mental and physical wellbeing challenges**

**West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Bradford Council** are asked to ensure the

arts are used as a valuable tool to underpin Bradford's health and wellbeing. International evidence shows the benefits of arts, culture and heritage, particularly for people's wellbeing, cultural cohesion, community identity, and satisfaction with their local area. Culture should be used as a valuable tool for supporting care leavers, struggling families, people who have experienced domestic abuse and other vulnerable groups.

**Make affordable, secure, suitable spaces available to cultural and arts institutions whenever new developments are built, or existing ones renovated/upgraded.**

**Relevant government departments are asked to work with West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Bradford Council** to create affordable and accessible entry and engagement opportunities for every community in Bradford, with decisions taken in the long-term interests of local people.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

There is something unique and exciting happening in Bradford. Having secured the title of UK City of Culture 2025, Bradford is creating its own renaissance with newfound hope and confidence. There is already a rich cultural heritage across the district which attracts a vibrant visitor economy. Creative people are the lifeblood of this sector and engage in everything from community-led projects at Keighley Creative to Kala Sangham. Bradford is the jewel in the crown of the Pennines, and now is its time to shine.

Bradford's standpoint is unique with 11 National Portfolio arts organisations recognised by the Arts Council, of which Bradford & Ilkley Literature Festivals, and the Bronte Parsonage Museum are examples. The district's strengths in design and arts are also reflected in its proud position as the hometown of David Hockney, whose work can be seen in the Hockney Gallery and Bradford College's Hockney Building.

Bradford is home to a vibrant infrastructure of cultural sites, including the National Science and Media Museum, The Alhambra Theatre and Bradford Live (opening in 2024) in its city centre, and the Industrial Museum, Cliffe Castle and the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway where the iconic Railway Children was filmed. A geographic mix of urban and rural locales is interspersed with 2,287 listed buildings and canals and waterways.

Bradford also holds the accolades of UNESCO World Heritage site in Saltaire and the UNESCO City of Film, and the University of Bradford is working cooperatively on a European Research Council programme of undersea archaeological research. Bradford is home to the annual Bradford Literature Festival and Ilkley Literature Festival. The recently announced Brit School North, which plans to open in 2026, will offer free courses in dance, music and theatre to 500 pupils, aged 16-19. Bradford is a place that is knowingly different in having a diverse and youthful population, and a dynamic edge of cultural and creative diversity to match any city in Europe.

# CULTURE

## THE CHALLENGE

A lack of investment and of sustainable employment opportunities can lead to difficulties for Bradford in telling its own unique story.

The challenges presented by Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis continue to be felt and the creative industries have experienced challenges in accessing arts and culture funding over recent years.

Coupled with increasing rents and the skills shortage in this area, Bradford has not been able to capitalise on its rich heritage and talent pool to its full potential. As funding and expenditure of our arts, culture, and community organisations decline, their contributions to community wellbeing, skills development, and employment opportunities will continue to decrease.

## CURRENT STRATEGY

We want Bradford to become a thriving, diverse and sustainable cultural and creative sector playing a leading role in the growing economic success of the district.

The 'Culture is our Place' partnership has set out ten ambitions over the next ten years to realise Bradford's cultural vision:

- Creativity thrives in every corner of the district.
- Making the most of what we have.
- Making the most of who we are.
- Network capacity.
- Thinking big.
- Live life better.
- Creating an explosion of opportunity.
- Having fun.
- Bradford will know itself better.
- We will tell our own story.



Bradford's Cultural Place Partnership has adopted ten key lines of progress that will help ensure the long-term success and sustainability of Bradford's cultural sector:

- Give every primary age child the opportunity to learn the district's story through co-creation of a Bradford Curriculum.
- Increase the number, range, scale and ambition of arts, culture and heritage activity and partnerships, creating 3,000 new jobs and increasing visitor numbers and spend.
- Realise capital projects that will rehouse, reimagine and repurpose the district's cultural and heritage assets.
- Give 250,000 people in the district's most deprived wards the opportunity to get involved with arts, culture and heritage activities.
- Draw 50% of Bradford's creative workforce, audiences, and cultural leadership from currently under-represented people.
- Adopt the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, underpinning ethical and sustainable practice across the sector.
- Level up national investment per capita to match other major English cities.

- Create a calendar of high-quality festivals and events with local, national and international significance.
- Ensure that 70% of people are satisfied with the range of cultural opportunities in the district (up from 50% in 2021).
- Help ensure 80% of people feel that Bradford 'represents me and my life' (up from 50% in 2021).
- Regularly engage 70% of the local population in arts, culture and heritage activities.



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[bitc.org.uk](http://bitc.org.uk)

020 7566 8650

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