



BUSINESS  
IN THE  
COMMUNITY



# **PRIDE OF PLACE: A national vision for lifting up the UK**

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## WHO ARE WE?

Business in the Community (BITC) is The King's Responsible Business Network, the UK's largest and most influential responsible business network dedicated to building a fairer and greener world together. We inspire, engage and challenge business leaders to take practical action to mobilise their collective strength as a force for good in society.

## BITC'S PRIDE OF PLACE PROGRAMME

**BITC brings together business leaders, government and communities to collectively inspire impact and action, creating a Pride of Place vision that tackles their most pressing challenges. We are already working in communities in every region and nation to deliver our tried and tested model to transform lives, with a target of tackling 50 of the most deprived communities across the UK. Partner with us to drive immediate impact, create lasting change, and foster economic growth across the UK.**



For 40 years, BITC has worked alongside communities, recognising that they understand their own challenges and how to solve them, but often struggle to mobilise resources and access national or regional support.

We've learned that the key to driving growth and breaking down barriers to opportunity is uniting local businesses, charities, schools, colleges, and government behind a shared vision. We convene 'Pride of Place Partnerships', which bring these groups together to create a unified, long-term plan for sustainable progress and delivers impact.

To accelerate the Pride of Place Programme, we need government at all levels to partner with us, creating lasting and meaningful change at pace and scale. "Pride of Place: A national vision for lifting up the UK" outlines how BITC and government can make this happen together.

## What is the Challenge?

Regional income inequality in the UK is higher than in any other large European country<sup>1</sup>, and poverty is entrenched in too many of our local communities. A lack of confidence, skills, investment and collaborative action is stifling regional economic growth and productivity. Too often, access to opportunities is determined by your postcode rather than your determination and enterprise. Successive governments have tried to drive regeneration and tackle regional disparities. Significant resources have been deployed behind these efforts, sometimes successfully, but lasting regeneration in many communities and places across the country has proved more challenging. More than one in five people in the

<sup>1</sup> [Ending stagnation - The Inquiry](#)

UK (21%) were in poverty in 2022-23<sup>2</sup>, and an estimated 13.2% of all people aged 16 to 24 years in the UK were NEET in July to September 2024<sup>3</sup>.

The best places, whether they are in our cities, towns or in rural communities, offer educational opportunities, good jobs and housing, cultural and sporting engagements and healthy lives. But too many places simply don't work – those are the places where people are sicker, poorer, and find it difficult to get qualifications, good jobs, or decent housing.

## What is the Current Context?

This challenge has been recognised by the current government through its mission-led approach:

**MISSION 1: Economic growth across the country**

**MISSION 4: Break down barriers to opportunity**

The government's commitment to handing more power to local leaders and communities via devolution provides an exciting opportunity to deliver the genuine transformative change that many of our communities need.

<sup>2</sup> [UK Poverty 2025: The essential guide to understanding poverty in the UK | Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\), UK - Office for National Statistics](#)

However, for the benefits of this to truly reach all corners of the UK, local people in local communities need to feel included in the national conversation and not 'left behind'. In this new era of devolved governance, with larger unitary and combined authorities, there is a real risk that the distinct identity of local places—and the unique challenges and opportunities they face—could be overlooked.

The newly announced Plan for Neighbourhoods goes some way to addressing this, and has many synergies with BITC's approach – long-term, holistic and cross-sector focused - and by partnering with BITC, we can achieve greater impact together.

BITC, with our member businesses, has already been working to deliver these missions in the most difficult places across the UK, with a target of tackling 50 of the most deprived communities across the UK by 2032.





# WHAT IMPACT IS OUR **PRIDE** **OF PLACE** PROGRAMME HAVING?

March was a busy month for the 2025 PRIDE OF PLACE programme. We were pleased to see the impact of the programme on the school community. The following are some of the highlights from the month:

- The school community was invited to participate in the PRIDE OF PLACE programme. The response was very positive, with many students and staff members taking part in the various activities.
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**Key Messages**

- PRIDE OF PLACE is a monthly initiative that aims to celebrate the achievements of the school community.
- The programme is designed to be inclusive and to provide opportunities for all students and staff members to participate.
- The programme is a key part of the school's commitment to excellence and to providing a high-quality education for all.
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## CASE STUDY

### Driving Investment and Breaking Down Barriers to Opportunity in Blackpool

In 2016, Blackpool had the highest concentration of deprivation in England, with 10,000 substandard housing units impacting quality of life. In Claremont ward, life expectancy was ten years below the national average. Short-term, disjointed efforts by government and charities exacerbated these issues, eroding trust and leading to long-term neglect.

In early 2017, BITC launched the Blackpool Pride of Place Partnership to test a place-based regeneration model. A small team, chaired by Christine Hodgson (Chair, Severn Trent and Blackpool alumni) and funded by local businesses and Blackpool Council, worked on the Blackpool Prospectus, a unified plan for change that has gained widespread support.

This approach has ensured that investment and resources deliver long-term impact. To date, £1 billion has been invested, with another £1 billion in the pipeline. Key developments include:

- **Leisure:** New conference centre, hotels, Showtown museum, £300million leisure district.
- **Town Centre:** Civil service hub, multiversity, tram extension to the station.
- **Digital:** Deep-sea superfast fibre cable linking to the US, fostering Silicon Sands.
- **Housing:** Decent Homes Standard pilot and £90m investment in inner Blackpool over the last 18 months.



“

Through our partnership we have developed **a compelling shared agenda** for Blackpool that has won confidence across the political spectrum, from local to national level. This confidence has translated into **national government investment in our ambitions.**

**Anthony Lockley, Director of Strategy and Assistant Chief Executive at Blackpool Council**

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## CASE STUDY

### Breaking Down Barriers to Opportunity in Sheffield

A 2023 report by the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) found that young people who have four or more business-led career interventions are 86% less likely to be Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and earn up to 18% more than those without such support.

The **See It Be It** (SiBi) programme in Sheffield, a collaboration between Sheffield City Council, the CEC, local businesses, schools, and BITC's Sheffield Pride of Place Board, aims to connect schools with businesses to improve academic outcomes, attendance, aspirations, and social mobility.

In 2022/23, the SiBi programme supported 37 schools, engaged 608 volunteers from 118 employers, and reached 16,093 students. It helped schools meet Gatsby Benchmarks and strengthen career strategies. 80% of students said they understood how their studies related to future careers, and 83% were aware of the career options available to them.

Backed by Aviva and various partners, BITC will expand **See It Be It** to Bradford, Coventry, Newport and Rochdale in 2025.



## CASE STUDY

### Tackling Food Insecurity in Newport

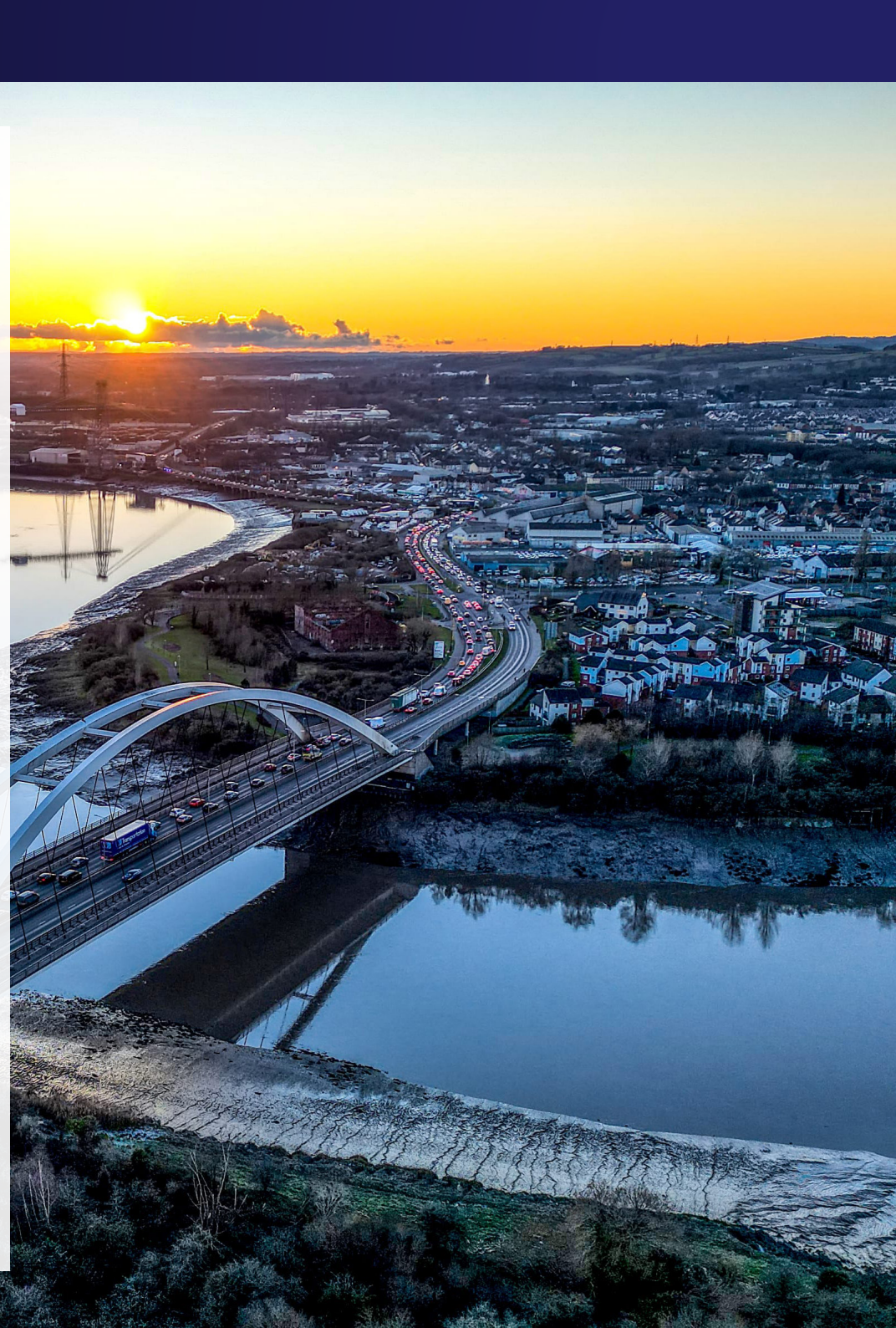
BITC has partnered with the Celtic Collection, Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO), Newport City Council, and Always Community Centre to combat food insecurity in Newport. Together, they ensure the regular distribution of freshly prepared frozen meals to those in need.

At the heart of this effort is the Collection Point, which coordinates meal deliveries from Celtic Manor Resort through GAVO's Food Network.

The initiative was inspired by a BITC King's Seeing is Believing visit in June 2023, where business leaders engaged with local communities to understand challenges and drive solutions. Since then, the Celtic Collection has delivered 16,000 meals in 2024, with 30,000 projected for 2025.

To ensure long-term impact, the Celtic Collection has introduced a community levy into supplier contracts, using its £9 million annual food and beverage spend to sustain and expand the initiative.

Beyond addressing immediate food insecurity, the Newport Pride of Place partnership is tackling root causes. The Celtic Collection has launched targeted recruitment campaigns, offering job opportunities to those involved in the initiative—creating a pipeline of hospitality staff while providing life-changing employment.





# HOW CAN WE WORK TOGETHER IN PARTNERSHIP?

Securing a national partnership with government will allow us to work in some of the toughest places across the UK together. We can collectively continue to drive economic growth and break down barriers to opportunity, using a replicable and scalable model with business playing a critical role.



# 1 LEAD WITH US

## Establish a National Level Place Taskforce Immediately

For the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to work with us to bring government together with business, local and regional government, and the voluntary sector, to establish a new ‘National Place Taskforce’.

This Taskforce will play a vital role in ensuring that, as devolution expands, its benefits reach every corner of the UK—while safeguarding the unique identity, challenges, and opportunities of local places.

By providing focused leadership, fostering cross-sector collaboration, and driving targeted action, the Taskforce will accelerate progress in some of the country’s most disadvantaged areas, delivering real and lasting impact.

BITC is hosting its first national Place Summit in May 2025, which could be the platform for announcing the establishment of the Taskforce.

**Given the pace that devolution is happening at, we recommend that this Taskforce is established immediately.**

# 2 PLAN WITH US

## Develop Formal Regional Partnerships to Drive Growth

Our business-led Pride of Place Partnerships have local and unified plans for change and are already developing local capacity and economic opportunities.

By working with us, either directly or through Combined Authorities and Unitary Authorities, we can bring business leadership and energy to support & implement regional industrial strategies that are genuinely capable of delivering benefits to every corner of the UK.

Our experience in Blackpool shows that working in partnership to create a shared plan helps align stakeholders, avoid competition, and make the best use of resources. This approach has attracted additional private sector funding alongside government support.

**Given the importance of driving growth in the UK, we recommend making us your formal partner to unlock the potential of business energy and leadership to all corners of the UK.**

# 3 DELIVER WITH US

## To Break Down Barriers to Opportunity in the Toughest Places

As well as setting the agenda for long-term transformation in places, Pride of Place partnerships create opportunities to deliver directly to underserved communities. From our 'See It Be It' employability programme in Sheffield mobilising businesses to provide food for those in need in Newport, to addressing insecure housing in Blackpool, we have the experience and capacity to drive forward the critical initiatives needed to overcome the barriers to opportunity that exist.

Where there is alignment on key locations, such as the recently announced trailblazer areas aimed at supporting young people and tackling the rise in economic inactivity, we would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with Combined Authorities via the Department of Work and Pensions and the Department for Education, to drive effective delivery as these roll out in 2025. Similarly, where there is alignment on the Plan for Neighbourhood locations, we would welcome the opportunity to collaborate to maximise impact.

**Where we are both working, let's deliver together to maximise impact.**





## Acknowledgements

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