

An aerial photograph of a large industrial complex, possibly a shipyard or manufacturing plant, featuring numerous buildings, cranes, and a central waterway. A white, irregular geometric shape is overlaid on the image, framing the central text.

**NORTH SOMERSET**  
**GROWTH AND INVESTMENT**  
**PROSPECTUS**



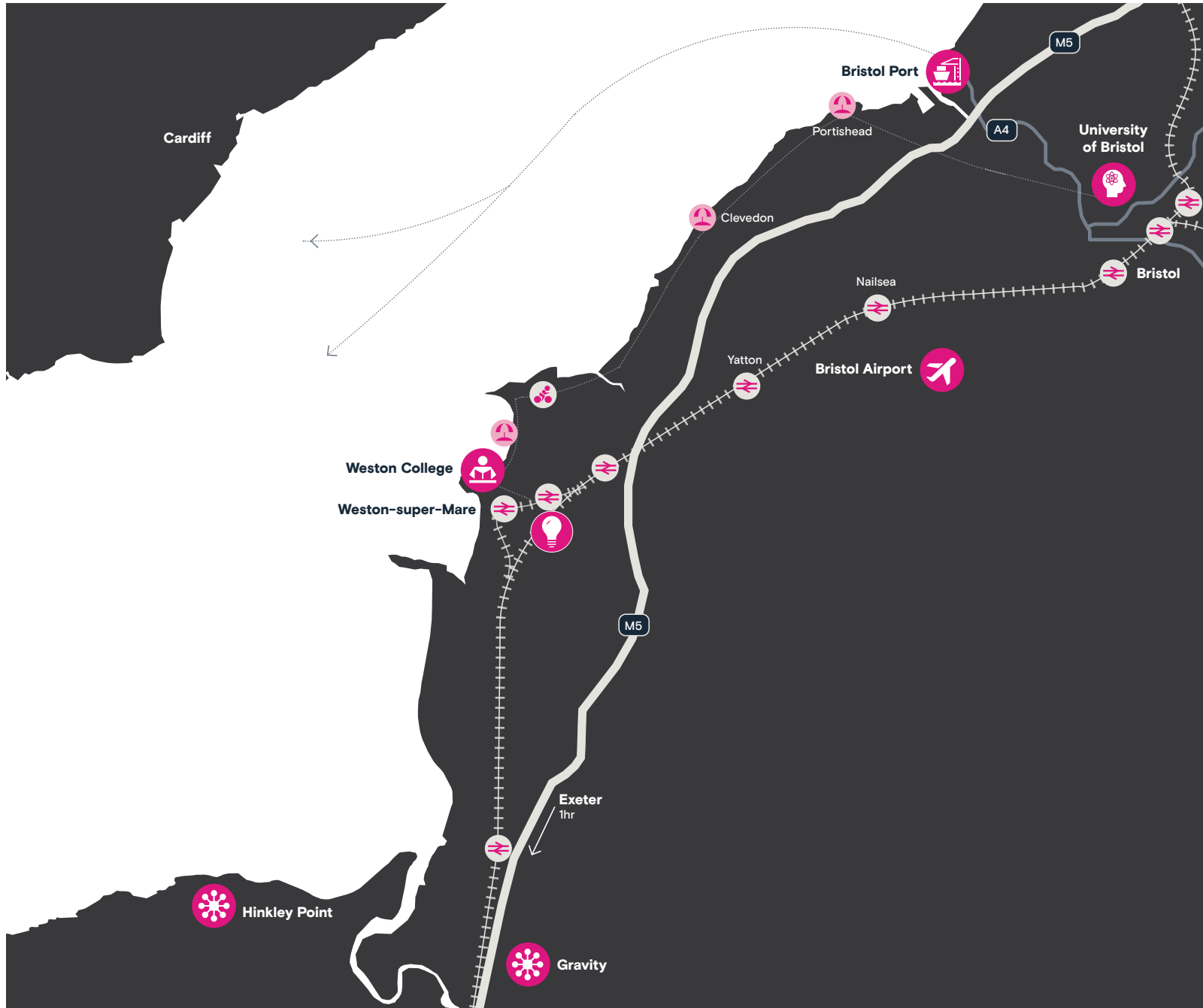
North Somerset is a place in transformation, offering extraordinary connectivity, value and an exceptional quality of life. North Somerset is a gateway to the South West and the world beyond, offering opportunities for investors and entrepreneurs to reach a global audience whilst enjoying a sustainable and balanced lifestyle.

North Somerset has all the ingredients required to promote innovation and growth. It is located in the West of England region, ranked as one of the most desirable areas to live in the UK, home to 1.1 million residents, boasting four prestigious universities and over 43,000 businesses. This well-connected and innovative area contributes £33 billion to the UK economy annually.

An integral part of the Bristol and Bath city region, North Somerset has a distinct and untapped potential, with spaces dedicated to growing enterprise and centres for innovation, like WsM Enterprise Area and Food Works in Weston-super-Mare. It has exceptional infrastructure enabling global connectivity with both Bristol Airport and Bristol Port in its

footprint in addition to road and rail networks. Our economy is highly entrepreneurial, with a business base of nearly 9,000 providing more than 86,000 jobs.

With ambitious plans for growth, North Somerset is working hard to build forward, enabling the transformation of its economy to support growing businesses. The vision is to deliver a resilient future for North Somerset's residents, visitors, businesses and workers. Our approach to achieving climate-conscious and inclusive growth will create and support high-quality, productive jobs, deliver amenities to support a new age of work and living, enable high-speed digital connectivity and deliver infrastructure to support sustainable living.



**PEOPLE:** Home to nearly 200,000 people and an economy worth £4.3bn.



**TALENT:** A high-value talent pool from renowned institutions with the best graduate retention rate in the country and opportunities for partnerships, driving innovation on our doorstep.



**ECONOMY:** A rich heritage of entrepreneurialism and innovation and home to nationally renowned brands.



**ENTERPRISE:** A nationally-leading Food and Beverages cluster, as well as strong industry sectors in visitor economy, logistics, creative industries, professional services, rural businesses and green tech.



**INFRASTRUCTURE:** Nationally important physical and digital infrastructure crucial to global trade as well as direct rail and road connections into Bristol, London, the Midlands, and the South West.



**EDUCATION:** Home to Weston College, the top performing FE provider in the West of England, and University Centre Weston, part of the new West of England Institute of Technology, a business-driven academic centre of excellence with a lens on creative industries, sciences, technology, engineering and health.



## A skilled workforce

The region's global connectivity, educational establishments with the UK's best retention rates, and high-quality natural assets make North Somerset an excellent place to live, work and establish new businesses. North Somerset is home to a diverse workforce across key sectors and skill levels, with 49,100 residents holding NVQ4+ qualifications and 2,800 entry-level workers ready to enter into employment.

Weston College and University Centre Weston have an excellent track record of working with businesses to identify future skill gaps, support and train the next generation of highly skilled workers, equipped with the know-how needed to drive future talent and innovation-led growth.

## Strong industry clusters

North Somerset is committed to enhancing the competitiveness of businesses across leading sectors: food and beverage technology and manufacture, advanced logistics, legal and financial professional services, fintech, health sciences, green manufacturing, creative and the visitor economy.

The ambition is to enable the regeneration of coastal towns, addressing long-standing inequalities including the stark levels of local earnings, capitalise on improved digital connectivity to encourage a reduction in the need for out-commuting and to build a skills base that will attract high value business investment.



## Exceptional connectivity

North Somerset offers excellent digital connectivity, with high-speed broadband across its towns and access to Dark Fibre in Weston-super-Mare. North Somerset is home to an established network of major road and rail connections, close to innovative and nationally important projects such as Hinkley Point C and the Gravity – Smart Campus, and with direct links to places like Bristol (20 mins), Exeter (50 mins), London (1hr 40 mins), Wales (1 hr), and the Midlands (2 hrs). The area offers international connectivity to Europe and overseas through our deep sea port and an international airport. At a local level, we have an ever-improving network of cycle links between towns and villages and into Bristol and Bath, offering local residents and workers a sustainable transport option.

## An outstanding quality of life for all generations

North Somerset attracts strong and ambitious businesses, offering a compelling balance between lifestyle, affordability and accessibility. It provides a connected and healthy place to live with clean air, access to picturesque landscapes, award-winning beaches and local facilities. Our towns are child friendly, with excellent schools and a network of parks, spaces, and amenities for healthy and active lifestyles. We support businesses to implement new ways of working and new workspace types, deliver improvements in our towns and enable different types and tenures of new, energy efficient homes.

## A proactive approach to growth

A place with strong and dynamic Council leadership, the area is building a track record of delivering successful projects. The Council is backing itself through strategic capital investments of £140m+ invested across North Somerset. We have growth-focused placemaking strategies in place for our towns and ambitious to deliver more through innovative models of collaboration and long-term investment partnerships. At the heart of the work being undertaken by North Somerset Council is an ambition to enable transformative projects that will deliver long lasting benefits for both people, place and climate.



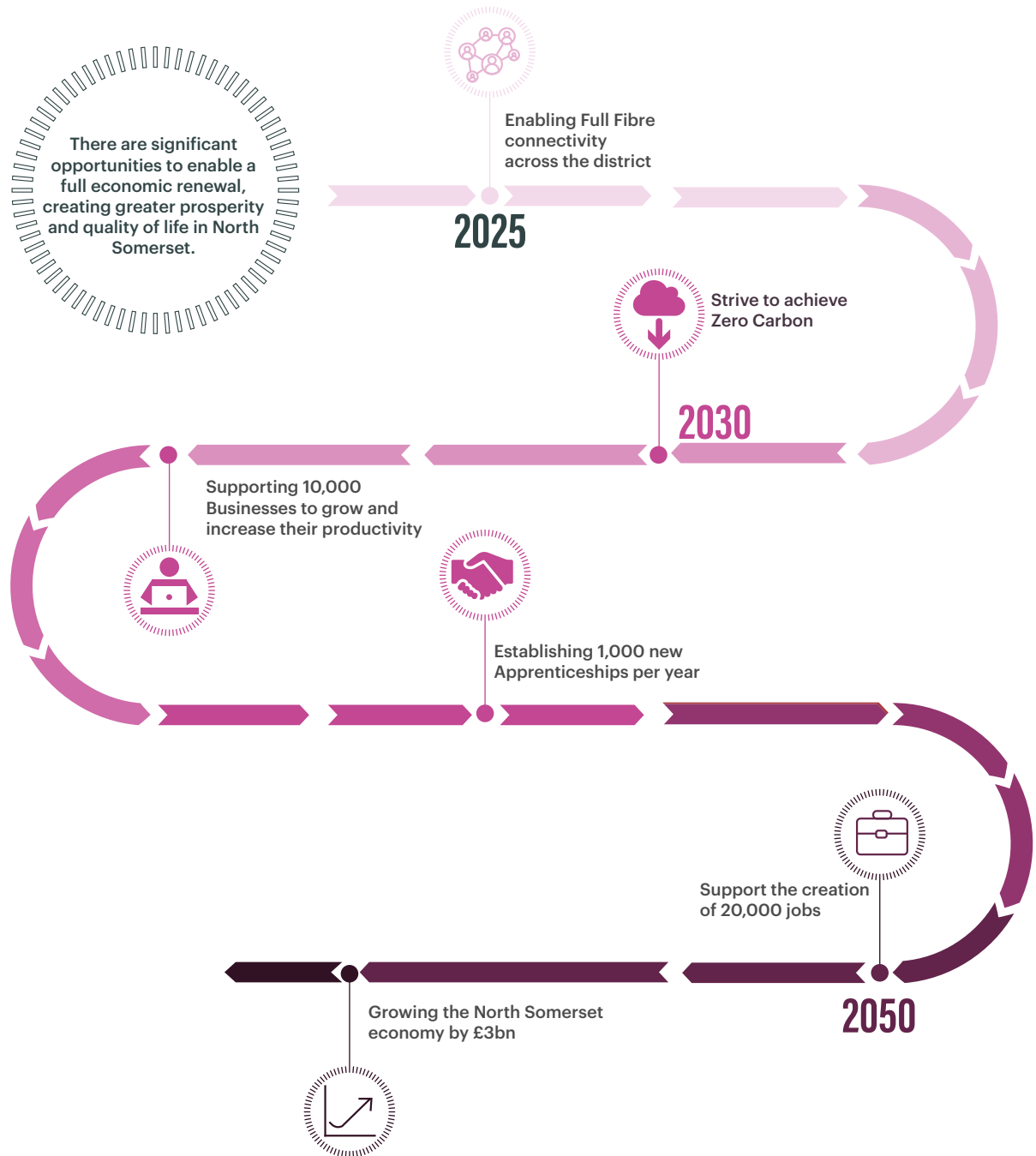
**“North Somerset is home to some of the most outstanding scenery, innovative businesses, and finest produce in the country. I can’t think of anywhere else we would rather be to run our business.”**

— Thatchers Cider

Our ambition is to accelerate growth and significantly raise the economic prosperity of the region to create an environment of innovation and creativity.

We will unlock North Somerset's potential, increase productivity, create sustainable jobs, while raising both our profile and the value of the region and its businesses.

Our bold and ambitious agenda will enable environmentally sustainable and resilient economic growth in North Somerset, exemplifying levelling up within the UK and beyond.





We are working collaboratively with public and private sector partners to deliver on our ambitions:

- Enabling activity that unlocks the potential and raises the value of assets
- Delivering high-impact initiatives that build on and maximise the collective strengths of the region
- Developing a skilled workforce that will support the growth and resilience of businesses and industry
- Supporting innovation and sustainable investment with strong Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) credentials
- Strengthening the reputation of the region and raising its profile and visibility



## OUR ACTIONS

- **Establish visible leadership:** We will work collaboratively with our partners to set ambitious and credible targets that shape the scale of our ambition. We will create a new and accountable executive team which can drive forward our shared endeavours.
- **Galvanise our existing clusters:** We will establish networks with business leaders across our key sectors to promote our shared ambition and showcase our strengths and opportunities among our communities, businesses and investors.
- **Progress our priority investments:** Working closely with central government and partners we are securing critical investment for North Somerset priority initiatives.



North Somerset's strategy for growth is founded on five strategic pillars:

## Digital and physical connectivity

Greater digital access will ensure that people have the technical skills for an evolving jobs market as employers across all industries embrace digital technology in their operations, using data and automation to support business expansion. We are actively working with suppliers to deliver next-generation digital connectivity, full fibre, 5G and telecommunications technology across the region.

## Town centre transformation

North Somerset is embracing the future of living today to make each of its towns desirable places to live, work and enjoy. The placemaking strategy for Weston-super-Mare, and emerging strategies for Portishead, Clevedon and Nailsea set out ambitious plans to create town centres that are compact, walkable and cyclable, with great connectivity, beautiful housing stock, productive workspace, good schools, and a skilled population. Our towns have all the ingredients for a successful local economy and excellent quality of life that promotes local working rather than the daily grind of commuting.

A number of strategic interventions have been identified to realise this ambition, amounting to £140+m of direct investment, including:

- £10m to support cultural and heritage programmes and revitalising our town centres. This includes repurposing underused retail space in Weston town centre to deliver flexible workspace for small businesses and entrepreneurs and spaces for skills, learning and employability training.
- £14m to improve digital training facilities and support businesses
- £98m to deliver cycling networks and infrastructure to support inclusive growth



**North Somerset council is partnering with City Fibre who are investing £22m to provide fibre by 2024 to 50,000 premises in Weston-super-Mare.**



## Homes and desirable places to live

With a projected population growth of 20% in the next fifteen years, North Somerset is supporting the delivery of new homes, enabling the delivery of high quality and inclusive places with a mix of types and tenure, jobs that support growth in key sectors, open spaces, community infrastructure, digital connectivity, retail, and leisure space that meet need and build cohesive communities.

North Somerset wants to align housing delivery with strong economic development and new job creation, supporting inclusive growth across the region. This means that the area will invest in its town centres, high streets, and new settlements. The ambition is to embed outstanding placemaking principles in every project so local communities can thrive and see a step change in employment and skills, life chances and health and wellbeing.

**“One of the best advantages about being in North Somerset is the large population just on the doorstep. Moreover, with a good road network and access to a regional airport, business opportunities can only grow.”**

– Puxton Park

## Talent and the Future of Work

North Somerset is creating the conditions to enable businesses to attract and retain the talent they need. What sets us apart is our offer for prospective businesses and workers who are looking for a sustainable and balanced lifestyle with access to great talent and employment opportunities. Our compact towns and villages are home to businesses across a range of sectors, including from our increasingly diverse communities.

Workers in North Somerset have access to great schools, parks and access to 26km of coastline and countryside. Our creative and hospitality sectors, alongside close links to the West of England, provide social amenities and experiences to employees and remote workers that enhance their experience and wellbeing, making North Somerset a more attractive place to live.

We are directly investing in innovation, and commercial hubs like WsM Enterprise Area and Food Works to support our growing sectors, enable opportunities for developing the skills and resilience of North Somerset’s population, and provide spaces for attractive employment propositions within our boundaries. Local businesses benefit from a pipeline of talent from Weston College and local universities.

High-quality productive and collaborative workspaces are also growing to support a range of businesses in new and developing sectors. Significant investment in digital infrastructure and full fibre will drive productivity and collaboration across sectors and geographies without the need to travel, further enabling flexible and distributed working and occasional commuting.



North Somerset's core sectors, including food and drink, professional services, logistics and sustainable technologies add significant economic value to the West of England region and beyond. The area's businesses' track record in research, technology and manufacturing capabilities provide strong foundations to drive growth across key sectors. Existing clusters are innovating in high value industries, with high-technology manufacturers making everything from aircraft parts to plasma screens and subsea control systems. Others benefit from the region's rich farmland, with businesses like Yeo Valley and Thatchers producing award-winning and sustainable products.

To enhance the success of our business ecosystem, we need to enable the creation of industry-led networks and invest in the development of skills for jobs in emerging sectors. Our educational institutions are committed to prepare young people for success and are already working collaboratively with businesses to identify future skills gaps. Weston College has played a leading role in the creation of a new Institute of Technology (IoT), bringing together major institutions and advanced engineering and manufacturing businesses in the region. Setting learners on a path to high-skilled, high-wage careers in health and social care, advanced engineering and high-value manufacturing, and the creative, digital and high-tech industry sectors.

## Food & Drink

This sector is a major contributor to our economy. We have existing clusters with nationally-recognised businesses. The Food WorksSW is a vibrant and dynamic food and drink innovation centre located within the Food Enterprise Zone in the Weston Business Quarter, ten minutes from the M5 motorway. Nurturing food and drink manufacturers at the very start of their journey to providing more established businesses with the technical know-how to innovate and grow, the facility provides food and drink manufacturers with the space, support and access to industry-leading entrepreneurs needed to succeed.

## Sustainable technologies

North Somerset will grow its green economy, working in partnership with regional inward investment organisations and residents to access skills to support the sector. Existing partnership with Invest Bristol and Bath will develop a green industries inward investment programme and attract businesses in the green economy. This will build on the local economic benefits already achieved through low carbon projects such as Hinkley Point C and the work with skills providers to ensure the local workforce has the appropriate skills for green industries.

## Professional services

There is increasing demand for high-quality spaces in the professional services sector from businesses looking for a place that enables a balanced lifestyle. North Somerset offers high-speed broadband with access to heritage and natural landscapes to support wellbeing. Investment in the delivery of high-quality workspace within our towns to work and collaborate in will support more businesses and entrepreneurs. From a skills perspective, Professional Services is one of the largest sectors within North Somerset, with more than half of the local population trained in this sector.



**Weston College is an Ofsted outstanding college of further and higher education in Weston-super-Mare. It provides education and vocational training to nearly 30,000 learners across the county.**

## Visitor Economy

North Somerset's plans for the visitor economy prioritise the promotion and growth of environmentally friendly holidays, and targeted support to improve the quality and diversity of the visitor economy. This will be further enhanced by new infrastructure that enables over 5m visitors per year to enjoy North Somerset's natural assets, like the Pier-to-Pier cycleway, Marine Lake improvements and investment in Birnbeck Pier.

## Creative industries

The strength of this sector to the local economy prior to the pandemic illustrates its potential for high future growth. North Somerset is building on flagship national arts and culture events like Dismaland and See Monster to showcase our ambitions for creative work and leverage further inward investment and funding. This aligns well with the Weston Placemaking Strategy's aims to regenerate the town centre where "demand-led support will be needed to support the inception, change and growth of business activity in the town" particularly through developing creative hubs.

## Logistics

North Somerset's infrastructure is invaluable to the economy of the region, offering exceptional connections into the rest of the country and overseas. Our Economic Plan sets out actions to maximise employment and supply chain opportunities generated by innovation in the region, particularly in the aviation, green tech and clean energy sectors. There are also opportunities to work with key partners for ongoing lobbying and positioning of deep-water Bristol Port to become a freeport.

There is a specific spotlight on strategic commercial sites which have the potential to create significant new jobs and deliver sustainable economic activity. WsM Enterprise Area (WsM EA) is the largest example. WsM EA is home to FoodWorks, a DEFRA-designated Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ)<sup>1</sup>.

The site is built to support a number of growing sectors, such as logistics and hybrid employment premises space – creating space for last-mile delivery, diversification in sourcing and enhancing domestic supply chains and modern high-value commercial activities including automation and robotics.

The delivery of Hive Phase 2 and development of Weston Business Quarter will unlock the remainder of Council-owned land to deliver high-quality, flexible workspace to support growing businesses.

Options are being explored for environmentally sustainable businesses and support services within WsM EA, as well as facilities that could expand the capacity of nearby infrastructure and logistics hubs like Bristol port, such as an eco-freight consolidation centre and an electric forecourt.



One of only 17 FEZ areas designed by The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), North Somerset's Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ) is located within the WsM Enterprise Area.

The 18 acre Food Enterprise Zone will provide an exciting opportunity for food developers, distributors, food and drink manufacturers, R&D and packaging to co-locate in a prime location on the M5 opportunity corridor.

Businesses within the FEZ gain access to a number of benefits, including:

- Clear financial benefits like Business Rates relief and Enhanced Capital Allowances.
- Strategic location within a food cluster and near global logistics hubs.
- A simplified planning process - Local Development Orders grant automatic planning permission for certain types of development
- Business-ready infrastructure: Superfast broadband, easy access to transport links, training and access to the existing local talent pool.

<sup>1</sup> [www.innorthsomerset.co.uk/land-premises/the-food-enterprise-zone/](http://www.innorthsomerset.co.uk/land-premises/the-food-enterprise-zone/)



Innovation and long-term added value are the key strengths of North Somerset.

To deliver our ambitious Strategy for Growth, North Somerset is actively seeking to secure investment and commitments from delivery partners for a wide range of opportunities across our core sectors.

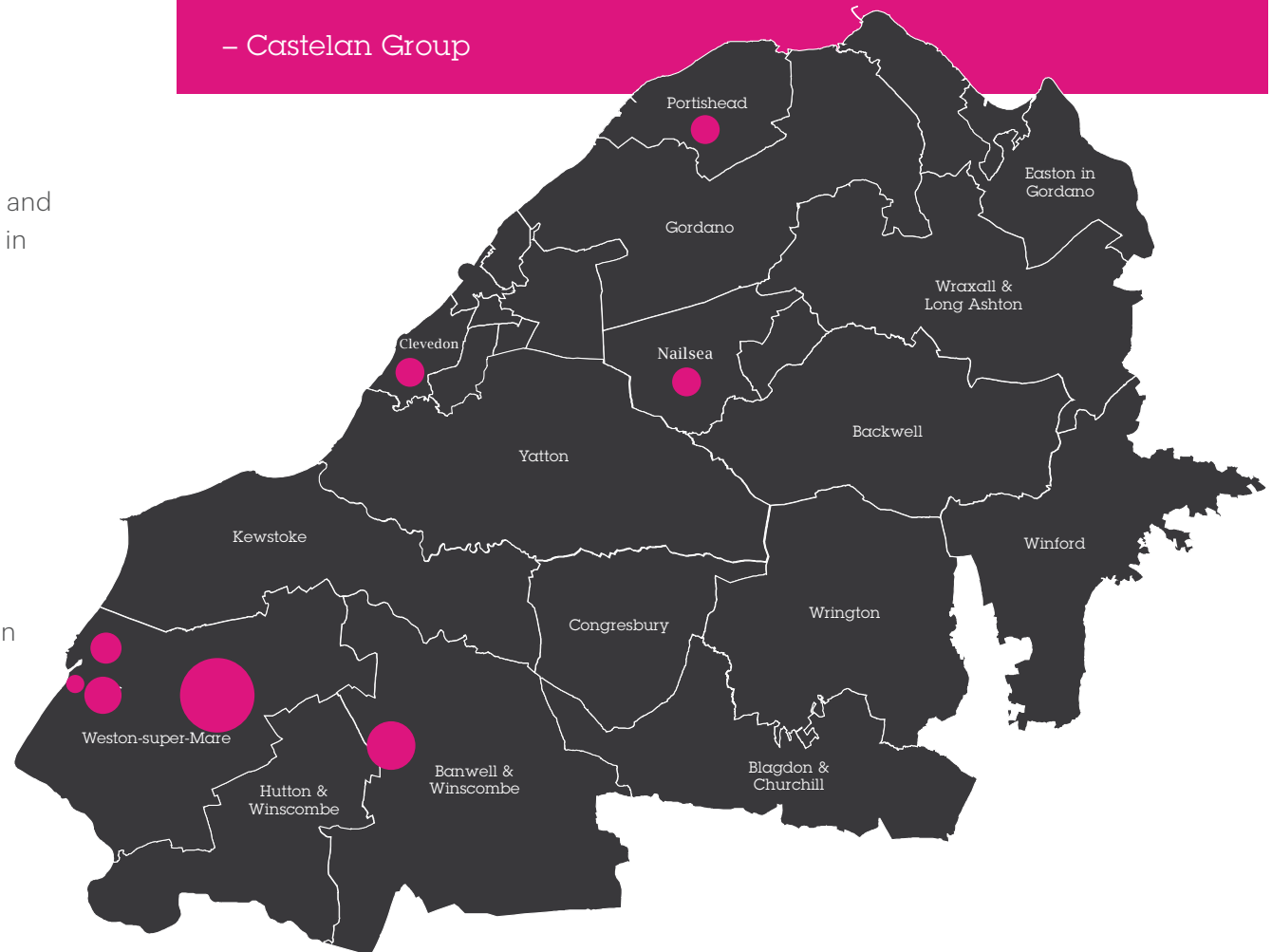
Ensuring that every investment has a robust environmental, social and governance (ESG) framework around it is critical to the region's success. Early assessments indicate that for every £1 invested, more than £3 of direct economic benefits will be generated for our towns and communities. Over a 10-year appraisal period, it is estimated that the strategic programmes and associated investment could generate more than £500 million in GVA uplift from employment.

## Over £1.5bn of investment-ready opportunities

- Junction 21
- Multiple projects within Weston-super-Mare town centre
- Banwell Garden Village
- Development opportunities in other towns such as Clevedon and Portishead

**“Weston-super-Mare, and the wider area of North Somerset, is exactly where the Castelan Group needs to be to attract the wide range of skills that are required for our business. With great transport links by road and rail and more affordable housing than Bristol, the town is rich with skills and talent that we want to attract. Add to this the superb educational facilities that are being developed by Weston College the future for Castelan, and indeed Weston-super-Mare, can only be incredibly positive.”**

– Castelan Group



North Somerset has brought together a partnership of Executive Leadership, business leaders and institutional partners around a singular mission: to enable the growth and economic resilience of North Somerset's businesses and residents.

The partnership has developed the features and conditions that are required to successfully deliver an investment programme of scale and significance. Together, they have identified infrastructure, housing and commercial investment opportunities that drive North Somerset's prosperity.

The council is using resources and networks to make North Somerset a valuable proposition for investment. Open to supporting business growth and investment.

## Our action plan

**Leadership:** our Chief Executive and senior leadership team are committed to our investment and enabling interventions programme, working closely with private sector champions to identify opportunities and tackle barriers to growth; and our strong political leadership actively supports our economic ambitions.

**Enabling innovation:** Public and private sector collaboration is the heart of the programme; we are focused on delivering interventions that support and level up local economies by creating new opportunities that bring high technology, high-quality, high-value jobs and opportunities to towns and cities across the district.

**Placemaking:** We will leverage expertise from the public and private sectors to continue delivering great spaces to live and work. Working collaboratively with Homes England, housing providers, developers and builders (large and small), and ensuring that development comes forward in line with our ambitious aims for net zero and inclusivity. We will continue to support and coordinate the delivery of the necessary infrastructure and strategic frameworks to support growth.

**Inclusive growth & sustainability:** Inclusivity is central to our strategy, our ambition and values. We will reduce health and social inequality by creating opportunities, raise productivity through skills, infrastructure and place-shaping investments. We will place carbon neutrality at the heart of our work, securing investment that promotes sustainability.

**Governance:** North Somerset Council are forming a model that brings confidence and transparency and provides overall accountability and decision making for the Programme. The aim is for local businesses to have a strong relationship with the political and officer leadership of North Somerset to maximise impact that benefits local entrepreneurs and residents alike.

**Partnership working:** We will bring partners together to make decisions and collaborate on our investment plans to ensure transparency, commitment, focus and a clear understanding of how the project will function and be delivered. We will back proposals that demonstrate potential for economic growth and, where appropriate, will co-invest through joint ventures or special purpose vehicles.



## Image Credits

The Bristol Port Company, p.2