



COVID  
RECOVERY  
COMMISSION

PAPER THREE

## Ambition 2030: A Partnership for Growth

How a long-term National Prosperity  
Plan can deliver growth and increase  
living standards across the UK

[www.covidrecoverycommission.co.uk](http://www.covidrecoverycommission.co.uk)







# About the Covid Recovery Commission and this report

The Covid Recovery Commission was formed in July 2020. The independent Commission brings together some of the UK's most prominent cross-sector business figures and entrepreneurs, UK policy experts, regional and national politicians and academics. The Commission was created with the ambition to examine the impact of the pandemic on the 'levelling-up' agenda, and to subsequently produce bold and innovative policy solutions to help reform the UK's post-Covid economy.

This report is the Commission's final paper, following the first two, which were focussed on 'Levelling up Communities' and 'Building Back Together'. Our analysis in both papers sets the foundations for our final ambitious policy recommendations, with the first setting out how we can tackle inequalities to deliver value-added growth, and our second focusing on how business and government can work together to increase productivity, innovation and business investment.

We are a business-led Commission, but our work has been informed not just by our eleven Commissioners but also by our Advisory Group, Policy Panel and our conversations with well over 100 stakeholders from across business, civic society, academia and policy. You can see the full list of organisations who contributed to our thinking on the Commission website: [www.covidrecoverycommission.com](http://www.covidrecoverycommission.com)

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# Chair's Foreword



**John Allan**

Chair of Tesco, Barratt  
and Chair of Council at  
Imperial College London

It is over a year since the UK first went into Covid-19 lockdown. We set up the independent Covid Recovery Commission in July 2020 to consider how, as businesses, we could support the action needed to ensure that the UK emerges from the crisis with an economy which is stronger, fairer and more resilient.

Our first report showed how Covid-19 has served to intensify many of the inequalities that were already present in society and our second report explored how business can help to tackle these inequalities. As we begin to emerge from the pandemic, this final paper sets out our proposals on how business, government and society can work together to build prosperity ensuring that individuals, families and communities right across the UK can enjoy better economic, social and environmental outcomes.

At the heart of this is a belief that economic success calls for a more compassionate form of capitalism, valuing stakeholders not just shareholders. More than ever, we believe that businesses must recognise that they have a broader role to play in supporting and driving the delivery of shared societal goals.

We want to see business, government and society working together to ensure we do not just recover from the pandemic but thrive in a post-Brexit Britain. If done properly, we are confident that this new compact will unleash the power of innovative businesses to drive growth and prosperity across the country.

To achieve this we will need to work together to develop the policies and approaches needed. As a starting point, this paper identifies five immediate national imperatives and puts forward ambitious policies in key areas such as innovation, skills, net zero and community resilience. We have also set out the case for an objective way of measuring our collective progress towards shared goals: a Prosperity Scorecard that allows us to track social and economic outcomes on a consistent national and local basis.

We hope this is a useful contribution to the national debate about how we build back better. We also hope that our thinking is picked up by parties across the political spectrum, by national as well as local leaders.

Thank you to our ten Commissioners, without whom this work would not have been possible. Thank you also to our expert Advisory Group and Policy Panel and all the organisations who helped inform our work.

I look forward to discussing this with interested parties from business and government.

# Executive summary

The UK needs a new National Prosperity Plan, co-created and co-delivered by purpose-led business, government and civic society. The plan must lead to better economic, social and environmental outcomes for people, families and communities right across the UK. To do so it needs to integrate everything which is great about Britain: our leading universities, world-class innovation and R&D, our businesses and financial system, our democracy, our institutions and governance. It also needs to tackle our historic weaknesses.

In this respect, a new plan is needed to address stubborn issues like poor productivity and inequality, as well as factors like digitisation, decarbonisation and changing working practices that are shaping our economy. It will also need to tackle and work with changes seen in the past year, with the pandemic having exacerbated health and economic inequality, fuelled the adoption of digital technologies and encouraged businesses to redouble their efforts on net zero and purpose.<sup>1</sup> In the last two years we have also left the EU and signed trade deals with new growth markets. While these trends provide significant opportunities for people and communities, they also present substantial challenges that have to be navigated if the UK is to prosper.

It is clear that there is no silver bullet. But we will not solve these issues without growth and innovation. That is why we must work together towards a vision for a better future: a stronger, more productive and globally competitive economy that is built on world class digital and physical infrastructure and supported by a strong UK supply chain. This cannot be driven by government or business alone. The development of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is a perfect example of how purposeful, globally competitive businesses can work as part of a tripartite model to deliver against extraordinary challenges.

Delivering on our vision will mean a fairer society in which everyone has the chance to fulfil their potential and where economic success does not come hand in hand with environmental damage or inequality. And it means baking in resilience to ensure that, as a society, we are better prepared to navigate future risks and transition to an economy which is more connected and greener.

The development of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine did not happen in a vacuum. There was a globally competitive life sciences sector in the UK to innovate and invest in vaccine development - indeed competition has meant the development and approval of several vaccines. This was supported by an active role for the Government in creating coherent policy (including regulatory policy) via the 2017 Industrial Strategy to foster collaboration between the public and private sector. The Government was not afraid to use its purchasing power to create the conditions for investment and to give purposeful businesses like AstraZeneca the confidence to commit to making the vaccine available on a not-for-profit basis. And most critically of all there was a clear national imperative around which a purposeful business like AstraZeneca could deliver.





## Modern Approaches to deliver on National Imperatives

This report does not provide the last word on how to get to this vision. Instead, shaped by our conversations with over 100 business leaders, subject experts, academics and civil society groups, we hope it lays the foundations for global competitiveness, green growth and prosperity in the next decade and beyond. The starting point for success will be an understanding that delivery is as important as policy. As such, we believe that the National Prosperity Plan should be built around a set of modern approaches for delivery:

- **Accountability:** Setting clearly defined objectives and metrics that allow us to make decisions and monitor progress. This should be delivered through **National and Local Prosperity Scorecards** that measure economic, social and environmental outcomes for people and places across the UK.
- **Tailored responses:** Requiring the creation of **Local Prosperity Strategies** and giving local leaders the financial control, tools and accountability they need to deliver them.
- **Collaboration:** Building on Local Enterprise Partnerships to create **Local Prosperity Partnerships** that bring together business, government, institutions and civic society around a common goal.
- **Purposeful stakeholder capitalism:** Purpose-led businesses leading delivery, with businesses committed to playing their full role in society.
- **Consistency:** Working together within a stable and long-term policy and regulatory framework.

These modern approaches filter through the rest of this report and by building on these we believe that a new partnership for recovery could deliver great things. Across each of the areas we have focussed on, we have sought to build on existing policies and institutions, with a drive to simplify not add or complicate. We are clear that our vision and goals need to be built collaboratively, but as a starting point we have identified five immediate national imperatives from the themes we develop in more detail below.

1. **Create at least one new globally competitive industry cluster in every region and nation of the UK by 2030.** Including by:
  - Introducing a new **UK Competitiveness objective for regulators**, so that they consider their interventions through the lens of the investment environment, growth and innovation (which stand to benefit future consumers) as well as competition and consumer protection.
  - Introducing **Catapult Quarters**, by using incentives and regulatory relaxations to bring together the UK's research and innovation firepower with highly skilled workers, digital technology, fast growing businesses, and domestic and foreign investment.
  - **Supporting the Digital Catapult to establish a centre in each Catapult Quarter**, providing "localised and tailored services" in all parts of the UK, to supercharge innovation, investment and business growth.
  - Introducing legislation and regulatory changes to unlock 'patient capital' from institutional investors and supporting SMEs by ensuring that *Help to Grow: Digital* and the Government's Super Deduction regulations are tailored to ensure SMEs can access the **productivity and market enhancing technology and software** that drives digital adoption.
  - Ensuring there are environmentally sustainable regular year round direct flights from the UK to all major global cities, to ensure that the UK keeps control over its trade routes, and launching **Help to Export** as part of a national exports drive. This would complement the Help to Grow: Management scheme with a tailored programme of learning, training and mentoring for SMEs with export potential.
2. **Make lifelong learning a reality and halve the projected skills gap by 2030 with the introduction of a Help to Train package.** This is essential to ensure

that disadvantaged groups and areas benefit from the transition to a digital green economy. Including by:

- **Introducing Individual Learner Accounts** for everyone over 25 to help them build their skills for the industries of the future.
  - **Replacing the Apprenticeship Levy** so that funds are better targeted on the skills needs of business and fully support the delivery of Local Prosperity Strategies and the closing of skills gaps amongst disadvantaged groups.
  - **Refocusing Jobcentre Plus support** to ensure that unemployed people without the skills needed to succeed in their local economy are supported to use their Individual Learner Accounts to retrain and upskill.
3. **Focus Government's buying power on the National Prosperity Plan, strengthening the Great British Supply Chain and delivering world class physical and digital infrastructure.** Including by:
    - **Investing at least 1.2% of GDP in infrastructure every year**, with any underspend ringfenced and devolved for investment by sub-national bodies.
    - **Creating the Government Consulting Service (GCS)** - a social purpose company owned by government with a remit to use government procurement and major project delivery to support the National Prosperity Plan and develop the Great British Supply Chain.
    - Immediate priorities for the GCS should include the use of **digital technologies to decarbonise the public sector estate, accelerating digital transformation including the rollout of 5G within the NHS** and boosting the productivity of capital spend by **delivering on commitments to offsite construction**. In each of these areas, action from the Government would serve to deepen and mature markets, bring forward investment and innovation and provide better outcomes more cost effectively.

- **Giving the National Infrastructure Commission statutory underpinning** and a clear role in reporting on progress against the delivery of its pipeline.
4. **As part of its approach to decarbonising the economy, develop the National Deal for Net Zero Homes - a 15 year pathway to decarbonisation of the housing stock and contribution to the low-carbon jobs transition.** Including by:
    - **Launching a National Negotiation and agreeing a National Deal on Net Zero Homes:** work with households to determine the barriers to decarbonising homes; secure a commitment from industry to solve those challenges with government providing the long-term funding and policy environment needed to enable them to invest.
    - **Rolling out Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs)** so every area can identify the best options for networks, heating systems and building fabric upgrades to deliver net zero.
    - Stimulating innovation and growth needed to drive down prices in the energy efficient retrofit market by the Government committing to **retrofitting all social housing by 2030**.
    - Exploring a **Green Homes Bond:** a social impact bond to provide the upfront funding for retrofit of buildings in return for a long-term share in the energy bill savings and incentives for energy efficiency.
  5. **Close personal and community resilience gaps in mental and physical health, finances and wellbeing in each year over the next decade.** Including by:
    - Local Prosperity Partnerships developing **Social Value Plans** and using a new **Community Infrastructure Endowment Fund** to match-fund business investment in communities.
    - Working together to develop a national voluntary **Good Work Standard:** a common set of voluntary



standards that can help businesses to support their workforce and guide government procurement.

- **Creating the Wellbeing at Work Guarantee:** ensuring that, by 2025, all employees across the UK have immediate and costless access to support for their mental health and employers have a national Wellbeing at Work Standard to help them to improve workplace wellbeing.

These imperatives and our suggestions for how we can deliver on them are just the start. As businesses we stand ready to work hand in hand with the Government and people right across the UK to make our vision of a stronger, fairer and more resilient economy a reality. We hope that our work as a Commission can act as a catalyst for this to happen, because only by working together can we achieve the truly globally competitive Britain that we need to raise prosperity for people, families and communities right across the UK.

**What does this plan mean for:**

## A mum returning to work

She accesses her individual learning account to develop the skills she needs to get a good job in the new economy.

Her grown up children have better paid work and life opportunities in the local area and are more motivated to stay close to home to find rewarding work.

Good Work Standard means that she has the flexibility she needs around childcare/other caring responsibilities. Accessible mental health support means that she can manage anxieties of returning to work.



## A small business

A clear plan from central and local government allows the owner to make long-term investment decisions including in which sectors, goods and services to invest.

Support from the Local Prosperity Partnership helps the business to tap into innovation funding, build links with the research in the Catapult Quarter, and develop new products. Improved Help to Grow and new Help to Export schemes support them to build export expertise and invest in digitisation. Combined this allows them to become a key supplier to a major UK-based international business and grow into new international markets.

Skills funding is easier to navigate and utilise, meaning that less time is spent navigating systems and more time growing the business and investing in jobs.

With a stronger offer on workplace support, more prospective employees are attracted to the business and productivity rises.



## A town

Local Prosperity Strategy provides businesses with the certainty they need to invest and rebuilds confidence and pride in the economic future of the area. More people are attracted to remain in and come to the area, the skills pool grows and productivity and incomes rise.

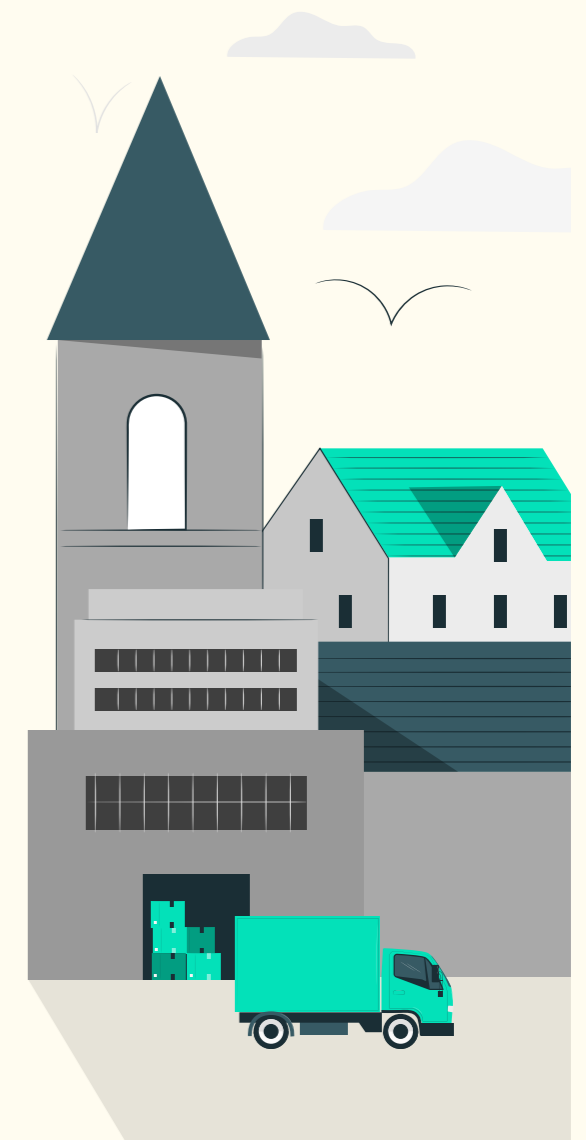
Smart procurement from central and local government rebuilds local supply chains, reigniting historic strengths in precision manufacturing and chemicals processing.

Capital from pension funds released to fund scale-up of a local renewable technology startup, which has been set up nearby to a local carbon capture project. This generates growth and helps to provide high skills jobs (tackling a low skills equilibrium).

Catapult Quarter brings together existing business, research and higher education strengths and helps to attract further investment and high skilled labour from overseas to the area. This area becomes a renowned green-tech innovation hub, securing long-term prospects for the local economy.

Local businesses match fund investment from the Community Infrastructure Endowment Fund to support disadvantaged families bounce back from the impacts of the pandemic and improve early years' learning and activities. This closes the attainment gap and helps ensure everyone can take advantage of new economic opportunities.

Local Area Energy Plan helps to develop the local skills and supply chain to retrofit the old housing stock, creating jobs, safeguarding the future of the planet and ensuring that decarbonisation doesn't come at the expense of living standards for those on low incomes.







# What has framed the Commission's Work?

We came together as a Commission almost one year ago. Our goal was to consider the impacts of the pandemic on the UK and how these interacted with both the long-term challenges seen across the UK and the future trends that are driving economic and societal change. We were clear from the start that, while the scale of these challenges is significant, by tackling them head on we can set ourselves on a course for a more prosperous future.

## The legacy of the past

The backdrop for the Commission's work is UK productivity that has lagged behind our international competitors, a workforce that has often lacked the skills needed to ensure our global competitiveness and historic underinvestment in economic and social infrastructure. The result has been some individuals, families and communities being left struggling to get by. For example, before the pandemic:

- 4.5 million people were in the deepest form of poverty (more than 50% below the poverty line).<sup>2</sup>
- Nearly one in three (28%) disabled people and their families were living in poverty and poverty rates for Asian (39%) and Black (46%) families were more than

twice the level of White (19%) families.<sup>3</sup>

- Life expectancy and years of healthy life were lower in more deprived neighbourhoods, and people from lower socioeconomic groups were more likely to have long-term health conditions.<sup>4</sup>

These outcomes are seen right across the UK. In fact, our first report showed that 18% of people living in the UK's most deprived neighbourhoods are in the Local Authorities with the highest economic output. In more tangible terms, this amounts to around 1.15 million people living in deprived neighbourhoods situated in economically successful areas.<sup>5</sup>

# 23%

Mortality rates are 23% higher in the most deprived 20% of neighbourhoods than in the least deprived.

Source: WPI Economics

## The impacts of Covid

Our first report showed that, while everyone across the UK has borne the burden of the pandemic, it is deprived communities and lower-income families that have been hardest hit.

Along with the terrible health and social impacts of Covid-19, the pandemic has had a significant negative impact on the UK economy. Large parts of the economy have seen their activity curtailed or suspended completely for much of the last twelve months. The UK has seen the largest annual fall in economic output recorded since 1709 and the Government's budget deficit is the highest in history during times of peace.<sup>6</sup>

In this light, it is no surprise that the number of payrolled jobs in the UK was more than 700,000 lower in February

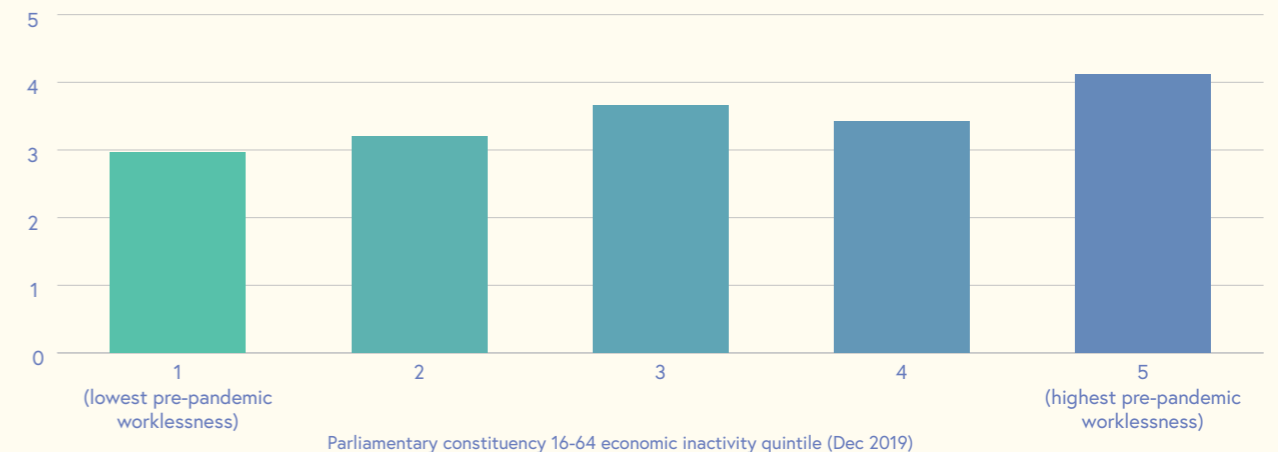
2021 than at the start of 2020.<sup>7</sup> In turn, the number of people claiming Universal Credit has nearly doubled, rising from 2.4 million people in February 2020 to 4.1 million in November 2020.<sup>8</sup>

The full extent of the impacts are also still to be felt. At the time of writing, more than four million jobs continue to be supported by the Government's furlough scheme, meaning that further impacts should be expected as the Government unwinds the very significant support that it has provided. Again, it is those areas that were already struggling, that have been hardest hit. For example, those constituencies with the highest levels of worklessness prior to the pandemic have seen the highest rises in unemployment benefit claims and currently have the highest proportion of the workforce furloughed.

**"The issues that we saw pre-covid are intensifying."**

English Mayor, Policy Panel member

Percentage-point increase in unemployment claimant rate by pre-pandemic economic inactivity quintile, Great Britain (Feb '20 - Feb '21)



Source: WPI analysis of ONS (2020). Benefit claims data via NOMIS



### The challenge and opportunity of the future

Looking to the future, a range of forces including digitisation, new business models, automation, changing working practices, delivering a world class net zero economy and a new economic relationship with the rest of the world following Brexit, all provide significant opportunities. However, they also present challenges that need to be navigated. Examples for flexible and home working and decarbonisation are highlighted below.

For some, digitisation and the role it is playing in changing working practices could provide a potentially significant boost to wellbeing. Six in ten people working remotely during lockdown say that homeworking allowed them to achieve a better work-life balance.<sup>9</sup> The majority of people that have been able to work from home for the first time

during the pandemic, say that they want to continue to do so.<sup>10</sup> Increased home and flexible working could also play a key role in levelling up the country.<sup>11</sup>

But not all jobs are suited to such flexibility and it is clear that those least able to work from home, have been hit hardest by the economic fallout of the pandemic. There are also wider challenges of a move to home working, including the impacts on city centres, real estate and hospitality. And, as we look to the future, those jobs most at risk from automation and increasing job insecurity, and least likely to be amenable to flexible working, are most heavily concentrated on those people and communities that are already struggling to make ends meet.<sup>12</sup>

Decarbonisation and the delivery of net zero give the opportunity for the UK to take a global lead in research, innovation and the commercialisation of new technologies needed for a greener future. As such, the opportunities that arise to build globally competitive industries and significant employment growth are clear.

### What are the benefits to working from home after the pandemic?



51% said spending less time commuting to and from work



38% said spending more time with their family

Source: Source: WPI for VMware: Building a resilient future

**“Among those who never worked from home before COVID but now do so all the time, fully 91% say they want to be able to do so at least some of the time once the pandemic is over.”**

YouGov<sup>13</sup>

**“Covid has transformed the way that we live and work - there is an opportunity to level out activity across the UK.”**

Richard Sloggett, Former special adviser to Matthew Hancock, Secretary of State of Health and Social Care

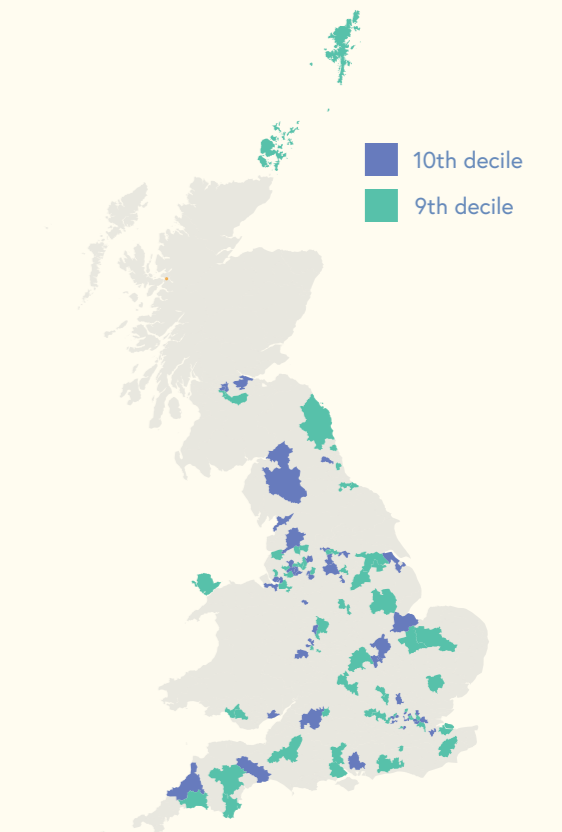
**“In 2030 across England there could be as many as 694,000 direct jobs employed in the low-carbon and renewable energy economy, rising to over 1.18 million by 2050.”**

LGA<sup>14</sup>

However, the transition to a net zero economy also comes with significant risks. Jobs right across the country are at risk from the transition, but those areas with the weakest labour markets prior to the pandemic are also those currently most reliant on carbon-intensive industries. And the green jobs of the future are not necessarily suited to the existing skills and experience of many of those with jobs at risk.

Each of these issues clearly presents a significant challenge. However, by identifying these now, we hope that we can work together to ensure that all individuals, families, businesses and communities right across the UK can be supported to grasp the opportunities of the future.

Places with the top 20% of carbon-intensive jobs are spread right across the UK



Source: CRC analysis of Onward: Greening the Giants

**“My fear is that my most disadvantaged constituents won’t be able to take advantage of new training and jobs in the green economy.”**

Labour MP





# Section 1: Our vision for a stronger, fairer and more resilient economy

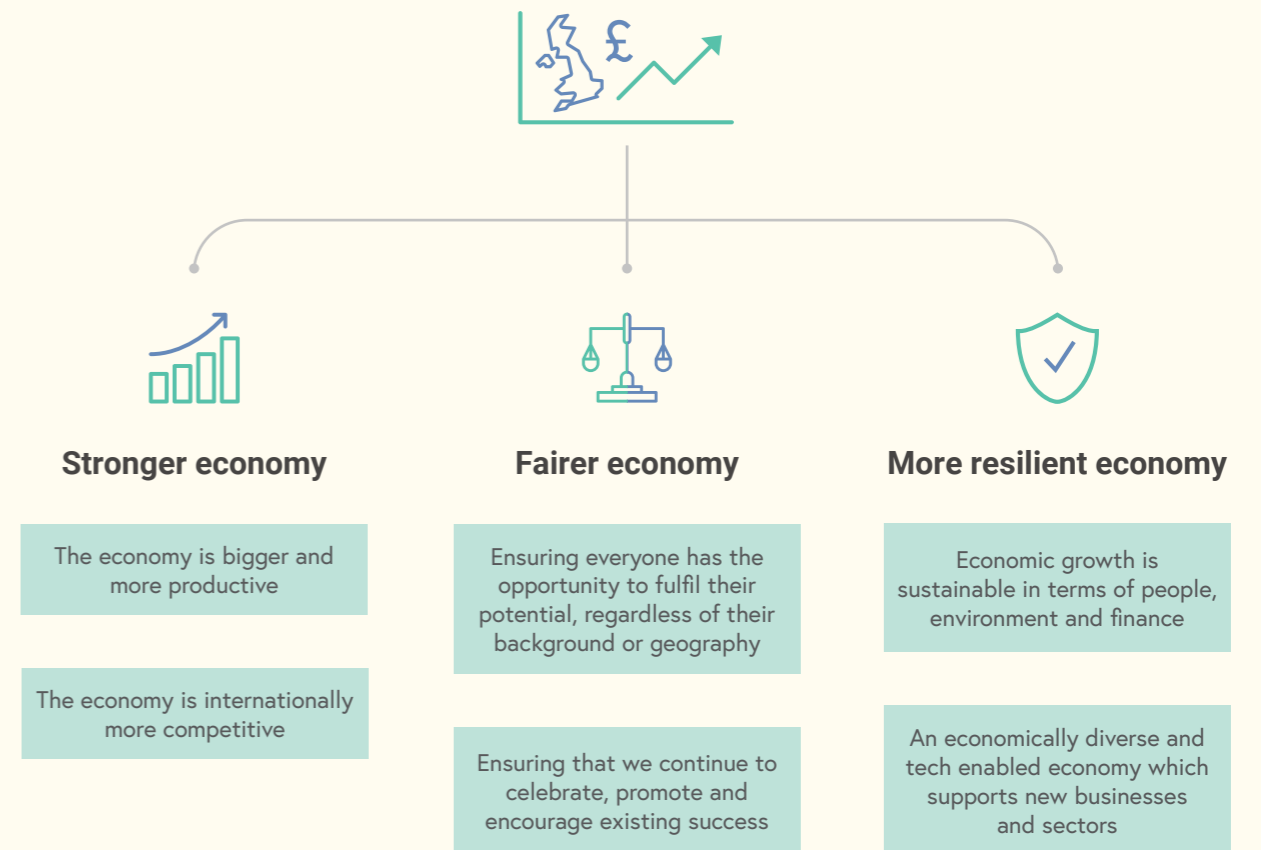
Based on the analysis above it is clear that prosperity needs to be boosted in every nation, city, town and neighbourhood across the UK. Doing so will require significant changes, which need to build on what has worked in the past, learn lessons from previous failures, make the most of future opportunities and navigate the challenges that we will face.

As leaders of businesses, Commissioners know that delivering on such an ambitious agenda requires clarity over what it is that we want to achieve, and how it is that we will seek to achieve it. That is why the Commission has spent time to lay out its vision for what the recovery should achieve and the framework through which it should be approached.

Our conclusion is that the Government should have three core objectives that relate to its own levelling up agenda. These are to ensure that the recovery leads to the UK's economy and society being stronger, fairer and more resilient.

**“The most important thing for government to do is to ensure that fairness is the guiding principle behind every recovery policy that it develops.”**

Emmanuel Ogbonna, Chair of Welsh Government Commission into the Socio-economic Impacts of Covid-19 on BAME Groups, Cardiff University



In terms of what that means in practice, the Commission has set out three pillars that provide the foundations through which these objectives can be achieved. The first two focus on two of the defining challenges for the UK, now and in the future; **building globally competitive industries** and **delivering net zero**. We know that globally-focussed, vibrant, growing businesses and industries are at the heart of economic prosperity and that, in future, our economic success must go hand in hand with delivering decarbonisation.

However, achieving these will not be enough to meet our objectives. As the last decades have shown, economic growth and global competitiveness do not always guarantee

improvements in outcomes for all. And, as highlighted above, delivering on net zero could present real challenges for those individuals and communities currently reliant on jobs in industries most affected by the need to decarbonise.

That is why our third pillar of **purpose-led business** is so important. As a Commission, we believe that business has a strong role in ensuring that globally competitive industries and net zero are delivered in a way that secures prosperity for all. In this respect, we have much to contribute both in our roles as employers, investors and innovators and also in the role we can, and already do, play in the communities in which we work.

**“It’s what businesses do with their profit that matters.”**

Jamie Driscoll, North of Tyne Mayor





It is clear that delivering on our vision for the UK will require long-term action across many areas. As we highlight in our second report, this action is not for government alone. In this report the Commission focuses on five areas for action where business, government and communities can work together to make a stronger, fairer and more resilient economy a reality.

### Covid Recovery Commission: Organising framework

We want to achieve...	A stronger, fairer and more resilient economy		
Achieving this will require delivering...	Globally competitive industries	Net Zero	Purpose-led business
Which will mean government, business and communities working together across five key policy areas...	Creating the conditions for innovation and value-added growth		
	Investing together in the skills of the future		
	Investing in and delivering world class infrastructure		
	Decarbonising energy demand to deliver net zero		
	Building community and personal resilience		

# Modern approaches for delivering national prosperity

Together our three pillars and five areas for action provide the basis of the “what”; the priority areas around which we need to come together to deliver against our common objectives. However, a key theme through the Commission’s work has been that delivery is as important as policy development.

**“90% of policy is implementation not the idea.”**

Andrew Wilson, former MSP and Chairman, Sustainable Growth Commission

That is why we have also sought to develop thinking on the “how”, and have built our proposals around a set of modern approaches for delivery. There are five key elements to our modern approaches, which underpin this tripartite model. These build on Commissioners’ experience as well as input from a wide range of stakeholders, including our Policy Panel and Advisory Group.

- **Accountability:** Setting clearly defined objectives and metrics that allow us to make decisions and monitor progress. This should be delivered through **National and Local Prosperity Scorecards** that measure economic, social and environmental outcomes for people and places across the UK.
- **Tailored responses:** Requiring the creation of **Local Prosperity Strategies** and giving local leaders the

financial control, tools and accountability they need to deliver them.

- **Collaboration:** Building on Local Enterprise Partnerships to create **Local Prosperity Partnerships** that bring together business, government, institutions and civic society around a common goal.
- **Purposeful stakeholder capitalism:** Purpose-led businesses leading delivery, with businesses committed to playing their full role in society.
- **Consistency:** Working together within a stable and long-term policy and regulatory framework.



**Accountability:** Success will rely on having clearly defined objectives and metrics and using data to make decisions and monitor progress. We believe that this should be delivered through a National Prosperity Scorecard. This must be visible to ensure transparency, clarity and accountability and include measures of factors that underpin national prosperity including business environment, education, productivity, institutional performance, health and natural environment.

**“We should be focused collectively on outcomes and Covid has made this more important. We need a wider basket of measures - a balanced scorecard - against which progress can be measured.”**

Combined Authority Policy Panel member

Measures should also identify inequalities in outcomes between different places and people. An approach can be built from work to measure the impact of the previous Industrial Strategy<sup>15</sup> and other internationally recognised measures of national prosperity.<sup>16</sup>

**“Equality and human rights have to be built into the associated investment, decision-making and progress measurement if this promise is going to be delivered effectively.”**

EHRC written submission to the Commission

**Recommendation: Develop a National Prosperity Scorecard**

The Government should develop a clear set of metrics within a National Prosperity Scorecard, against which Levelling Up, or the creation of a stronger, fairer and more resilient economy can be judged.

With clarity over a National Prosperity Scorecard, a clear plan can then be made for how progress against this scorecard will be achieved. The Government’s Plan for Growth has many strengths, including its focus on growing existing and building new net zero industries and driving international competitiveness of the UK’s high-growth, innovative businesses. It also highlights the need to develop infrastructure and skills to support these goals and level up the country. Business stands behind these ambitions and now needs more detail of a strategic approach that can go further than the initial Plan for Growth to outline how we can work together to deliver the innovation and investment needed to deliver globally competitive industries and prosperity across the UK.

**Recommendation: Develop and deliver a National Prosperity Plan**

The Government’s Plan for Growth has made a start, but we need to go further to ensure that recovery delivers a stronger, fairer and more resilient economy. This should be reflected in a National Prosperity Plan, that shows how progress against the Prosperity Scorecard will be delivered.

This should include work to identify the industries and sectors that are strategically important to the UK, both now and in the future and outline clear ambitions for the role that these industries and sectors can play in delivering national prosperity.

**Tailored responses:** With poverty and inequality spread right across the UK, success will mean ensuring that prosperity rises in all parts of the country. However, the nature of the opportunities and challenges varies greatly between regions and communities, and policy responses will need to reflect these differences. This means that we need to understand these differences, build plans and track progress on delivering prosperity at a local level. Sub-national (as well national) politicians and policymakers will also need to be held to account against a consistent set of metrics.

**Recommendation: Develop Local Prosperity Strategies**

Legislation should be amended to require that all Mayoral Combined Authorities, Unitary Authorities and Local Authorities are covered by:

- An assessment of their performance against the measures developed in the National Prosperity Plan; and
- A Local Prosperity Strategy based around delivering a stronger, fairer and more resilient economy.

But plans and measurement alone are not enough. International evidence suggests that successful strategies to build prosperity in places that have previously been left behind requires sub-national policymakers and politicians to be provided with the tools and finances they need to make a difference.

**“The Combined Authority has given us clarity of intent over the problems we want to address locally and to bring actors together to solve them.”**

Combined Authority, Policy Panel member

**“At the local level we can have a whole system view of how to effect change and meet our challenges.”**

English Mayor, Policy Panel member

**Recommendation: Provide sub-national political leaders with the powers to deliver**

The Devolution White Paper should outline a clear plan to simplify, provide consistency, strengthen and extend existing devolution arrangements in England. In particular, this should:

- **Create one strong local decision-making institution in each area:** Starting with Mayoral Combined Authorities and laying the foundations for Unitary Authorities/Counties to stand alone, combine or create new MCAs where they lack the scale needed.
- **Give these institutions the tools they need:** Set out proposals for ensuring that local areas have the policy and financial tools they need to deliver against these strategies, including multi-year, single-pot funding settlements and new revenue raising powers.





**Collaboration:** Successful local and national Prosperity Plans will need to integrate everything which is great about Britain: leading universities, world-class innovation and R&D, our businesses and financial system, our democracy, our institutions and governance. This will mean ensuring both that these engines of growth and prosperity are turbocharged in the next decade and that business, government, institutions and civic society work together in a fully integrated fashion.

**“All areas of society, government and businesses are becoming more interrelated, driven by the need for collective efforts to tackle the global challenges we face e.g. climate change, physical and mental health.”**

Ian Funnell, CEO UK and Ireland Hitachi ABB

We can already see progress on this front. With government and business working in collaboration to tackle issues like climate change.

**Case study: The Jet Zero and Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage (CCUS) Councils**

The drive to deliver net zero carbon emissions by 2050 is one area where we are seeing significant collaboration between business and government - as well as other stakeholders such as academics - to deliver a set of long-term and strategic aims. One of these, as discussed in our second report, is the CCUS Council, which advises the Government on deploying CCUS in the UK at scale from the mid-2020s through to the 2030s.

Another example of this is the Jet Zero Council, whose role is to help ensure that the fuels and technologies that will deliver low and zero carbon aviation in the future are developed in the UK. The membership of the Council includes several ministers, Heathrow, Rolls Royce, Shell as well as the Civil Aviation Authority. In order to accelerate progress towards objectives, the Council has two delivery groups focussing respectively on zero emission aircraft and Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF).

Source: Gov.uk<sup>18</sup>

Going forward, we need a mechanism through which such collaboration can become the norm in policy making and engagement. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), which have developed significantly over the last decade, already provide a forum through which policymakers and businesses engage and businesses can seek support and guidance. They also play a key role in promoting university-business collaboration to drive innovation. There are 156 university leaders on LEP boards, and LEPs are involved in 292 collaborations with universities.<sup>17</sup> This should be built upon by strengthening and focussing the existing work that the LEP network takes forward.

**Recommendation: Create Local Prosperity Partnerships to cement collaboration**

The Government should build on and rebrand LEPs to create Local Prosperity Partnerships (LPPs) that bring together businesses, local decisions makers and citizens to contribute to and deliver on Local Prosperity Strategies.

- LPPs should support MCAs / UAs in setting strategy as well as playing a key role in delivery and coordination, including business support for SMEs.
- LPPs should be provided with sufficient revenue funding to deliver the range of business support and engagement needed.
- LPPs should be given a formal remit to build engagement and consultation on infrastructure development, net zero and business investment (financial and otherwise) in local communities, in order to meet the Local Prosperity Strategy.

**Purposeful stakeholder capitalism:** Central to the Commission’s vision is purpose-led businesses leading delivery, with businesses committed to playing their full role in society. As our second report highlighted, as well as being the drivers of growth and job creation, businesses already play significant and wide ranging roles across the delivery of many shared societal objectives. That report shows how, with the right support from and collaboration with government, businesses could be empowered to go further. To this end, Commissioners have come together to jointly agree the following commitments.

**“Business needs to step up and lead the Covid recovery, articulating what they need to help drive the movement to reset and do things differently.”**

English Mayor, Policy Panel member

**1. Creating the conditions for innovation and value-added growth:** Our companies invest hundreds of millions in the innovations and technologies of the future. We pledge, however, to go further to help the UK become a world leader in developing new globally competitive sectors in the UK. To achieve this, we pledge to:

- Share our knowledge, networks and expertise across our different sectors, geographies and internal experts to support the creation of new globally competitive industry clusters in every part of the UK by 2030.
- Partner with the Government on priority workstreams that can create UK competitive advantage and drive economic growth, such as sustainable aviation fuel; CCS and hydrogen; the take-up of electric vehicles; and delivering net zero Homes.



- Address the digital skills gap of the future by adopting programmes to support new digital skills, such as the FastFutures programme.

**2. Investing together in the skills of the future:** Our companies represent some of the biggest investors in traineeships and apprenticeships in the UK. We recognise, however, that businesses will need to go further and faster to support communities across the UK to recover from the pandemic. We pledge to work with the Government to:

- Reform the Apprenticeship Levy to help unlock new training and apprenticeship opportunities across all parts of the UK.
- Assess the potential for Individual Learner Accounts and other best-practice schemes that have been implemented overseas.
- Seek to increase private sector training opportunities that enhance social mobility and support young people most impacted by Covid-19.

**3. Investing in and delivering world class infrastructure:** We are committed to and excited about the opportunities to invest in the UK's future infrastructure, whether it is in transport or clean energy. Companies make investment decisions for the long term. To aid the Government in developing long-term strategies, we pledge to:

- Share our insights and expertise with the National Infrastructure Commission, outlining the decision-making timeframes of our companies and the key factors that will allow the UK's business community to further invest in the UK's core infrastructure.
- Provide advice, expertise and resources (such as access to in-house experts) as the Government seeks to create a new Government Consulting Service.
- Work with the Government to try and boost the number of UK based suppliers who benefit from major projects in our relevant sectors.

**4. Delivering net zero transport, households and businesses:** We pledge to work with the Government to drive forward progress on net zero and we pledge to (Commissioners have set out examples of their initiatives and individual targets in the main report):

- Commit to deliver environmental leadership by setting stretching targets and taking comprehensive measures to achieve net zero as soon as possible.
- Commit to supporting and working with the Government in the run-up to COP 26 to make the case to our suppliers and customers about the importance of UK decarbonisation, supporting our ambition for a National Conversation on Net Zero.

**5. Building community and personal resilience:** Businesses have a key role to play as 'Good Work' employers. We are strongly committed to taking measures to support our colleagues' physical and mental wellbeing. We pledge to:

- Support the Government in exploring a new voluntary 'Good Work Standard' that builds on the principles of the Good Work Plan.
- Invest in the communities in which we operate and support the Government in establishing new Community Social Value Plans and a Community Infrastructure Endowment Fund to support match-funding of business investment in local areas.
- Support the development of a 'Wellbeing at Work Guarantee' to ensure that employees across the UK have access to and knowledge of key mental health resources.

**Consistency:** For business to play its full role in delivering the National Prosperity Plan, it needs the right environment. This will mean working together with government within a stable and long-term policy and regulatory framework. Clarity is needed across many areas, including how the Government will work with business in the long term to deliver our joint objectives. This will mean setting out clear roadmaps for taxation, spending and investment and, where Government is using incentives to promote particular activity, ensuring that these are committed to over the long term.

**“Changing political leadership means ever changing schemes and initiatives, rather than focusing on successfully delivering existing ones.”**

Tim Pitt, former Treasury Special Advisor

**Recommendation: Develop and stick to policy roadmaps**

To underpin investment from business, there is a need for a multi-year period of stability, certainty, and transparency around tax policy, spending, infrastructure and investment, developed in close consultation with business and other stakeholders. The Government should rapidly set out a multi-year policy roadmap covering, at the minimum:

- Its Comprehensive Spending Review;
- Details of taxation plans for at least the remainder of the Parliament; and
- Detail of how it will fulfill its commitment to increase public R&D spending to £22 billion a year by 2025, as part of bringing the UK's R&D intensity





## Section 2: Policies to support a stronger, fairer and more resilient economy

With the right approach to delivery and collaboration set out, the rest of this report turns to consider each of the five areas of action that the Commission has highlighted as priorities. For each area, it outlines some of the key opportunities and challenges that lie ahead, and the Commission's contribution to the policy agenda that will be needed to deliver on our vision.

What is clear is that there is no silver bullet and these recommendations are not intended to provide the last word on how to deliver the Commission's vision. Instead, shaped by our conversations with business leaders, subject

experts, academics and civil society groups we hope our recommendations lay the foundations of continued collaboration in policy design and delivery that can lead to green growth and prosperity in the next decade and beyond.

# 1. Creating the conditions for innovation and value-added growth

Global Britain is rightly a key part of the Government's policy agenda. Of course, the innovation, investment and growth needed to drive globally competitive industries are all ultimately led and delivered by business. But there is a clear role for the Government to work with business and be active in setting the **national framework** within which these industries can flourish. That is why the Government's National Prosperity Plan should include an honest assessment of our existing strengths and weaknesses, along with packages of policies to build on and tackle these.

One obvious area of focus is where the UK's regulatory framework harms our international competitiveness and makes it harder for firms to innovate, invest and grow. Examples raised by Commissioners and stakeholders include in digital and technology, where the UK has the potential to be a global leader, but the current UK regulatory environment risks giving an advantage to international competitors. Of course, the UK has a well established and internationally recognised regulatory system, and we certainly do not want a race to the bottom, to the detriment of consumers. However, we are working in an increasingly international context, with firms' location

and investment decisions often resting on whether the regulatory framework can support their growth objectives. These decisions ultimately have huge consequences for UK prosperity and the wellbeing and living standards of future consumers, yet regulators have no formal objectives to consider competitiveness, the investment environment and growth. To address this, regulators should be given a UK Competitiveness objective to sit alongside competition and consumer protection objectives.

**"... the UK is good at start-ups, not so good at scale-ups. Again institutional money could help if a small proportion of a default pension fund could be invested into private assets of this type. This is currently difficult from a regulatory perspective."**

John Godfrey, Legal & General



**Recommendation: Policies to unlock investment and competitiveness**

A) Introduce a UK Competitiveness duty for regulators - ensuring that decisions and actions they take carry due regard to the competitiveness of the UK economy, including the investment environment and growth. This would ensure that regulators consider the long-term consumer and societal benefits of globally competitive industries as well as shorter-term consumer protection and competition.

B) Introduce legislation and regulatory changes to unlock 'patient capital' from institutional investors to remove barriers associated with investing in venture capital and growth equity within DC pension funds, this could allow for tens of billions pounds of additional investment into high growth potential companies in the UK.

99.3%

There were 5.94 million small businesses (with 0 to 49 employees), in 2020 - 99.3% of the total business.

70%

SMEs employ 16.8 million (61% of the total) and account for more than 70% of job creation

FSB<sup>21</sup>, Nesta<sup>22</sup>

As well as improving the business, investment and innovation environment generally, the Government's approach must also focus specifically on supporting British SMEs to flourish. The reason is clear: SMEs account for the majority of businesses, employment and job creation in the UK.

Part of this will mean ensuring that the Great British Supply Chain is reinvigorated and is the driving force behind our globally competitive industries (see below). However, there are also specific areas where the Government can and should do more. In part, this has already been acknowledged through the Government's recently announced Help to Grow scheme, which aims to tackle two of the big

productivity-limiting challenges SMEs face: shortcomings in management skills and low adoption of technology. The Government's new Super Deduction for capital allowances could also provide welcome support. However, both schemes are relatively narrowly drawn and may not provide the support that SMEs need to boost productivity and grow in an increasingly digital economy, where software and cyber security are regularly more relevant than plant and machinery. For this reason, we believe that the Government should commit to reviewing both schemes with businesses to ensure that, as they evolve, they are tailored so that SMEs can access the **productivity and market enhancing technology and software** that drives digital adoption.

**Recommendation: Boosting digitally-driven productivity in SMEs.**

Government should work with business to ensure that, as they evolve, Help to Grow: digital and the Government's Super Deduction regulations are tailored to help SMEs access the **productivity and market enhancing technology and software** that drives digital adoption.

74%

74% of export-related jobs are outside of London. The export market for the UK's green sector is estimated to be worth £170 billion a year by 2030.<sup>23</sup>

**Building exports across the UK**

A strong export market, driven by innovation and built on a strong domestic supply chain, will help create growth to fund public services, improve productivity (exporting businesses are more productive), create jobs and help level up the country.

To be successful, we need businesses of all sizes to benefit from export opportunities. This will mean supporting more UK businesses to find and build global markets for their products and services. In this respect, international trading routes are just as important to our economy as roads and rail. Many exporters, especially SMEs and service

businesses rely on air routes, not shipping, but too many long haul routes can currently only be accessed by flying through EU hub airports. The Government should ensure UK exporters and their goods have direct and frequent access to all growing markets of the world by ensuring there are regular year round direct flights from the UK to all major global cities, ensuring that the UK keeps control over its trade routes. It should also ensure that key regional centres without direct and fast rail access have guaranteed year round access to the UK's hub airports.

We also need to ensure that the benefits of exporting can be accessed by all firms, particularly SMEs, where current export potential is not being realised.

375,000

375,000 SMEs have exportable products and services but are not currently exporting.<sup>24</sup> Capital Economics for Sage

The Government has already taken positive steps in this direction with the announced creation of the first eight new Freeports across the UK.<sup>19</sup> For those areas that stand to benefit, these come with a range of trade simplifications, tax incentives and likely support for businesses looking to locate within and use the Freeport. But there is no reason why all parts of the UK cannot enjoy the benefits of trade simplification and doing so could deliver a much needed boost to SMEs export potential. To deliver on this, we believe that the Government's existing Help to Grow scheme for SMEs should be extended to focus on exports potential as well as management and digital adoption.





**Recommendation: Launch Help to Export Scheme to support a national exports drive**

- A) Ensure that the Government’s £5,000 Help to Grow grant for businesses investing in productivity enhancing software applies to technology needed to use and manage existing trade facilitation mechanisms.
- B) Make investments in technology, advice and compliance activities that facilitate exports, tax deductible along the lines of the 2021 Budget’s Super-Deduction.
- C) Introduce Help to Grow: Exports for up to 30,000 SMEs over the next three years. This would complement the proposed intensive management training with a tailored programme of learning, training and mentoring for SMEs with export potential.
- D) Ensure there are regular year round direct flights from the UK to all major global cities, to ensure that the UK keeps control over its trade routes. This should include the ambition to replicate pre-Covid levels of North American connectivity with India and China.

**Supercharging and connecting innovation activity**

Alongside policies to unlock investment, boost SMEs and drive UK exports, there is a more general need for the Government to connect the dots across the policy sphere and leverage the private sector. For example, as we strike trade deals we should: ensure that transport policy supports getting people and goods to those markets; invest in our digital infrastructure to boost productivity and meet the needs of growing businesses; and tailor our education and training system to give people the skills they need to thrive in the new digitally powered industries.

Part of this needs to build on significant evidence of what is currently working well in UK innovation. For example, there are already a range of successful Catapults, University-led Innovation Districts and emerging Freeports across the

UK. International evidence also shows that where research and scientific expertise, business, finance, government and local society come together to deliver a shared plan, the result can be a significant boost in prosperity.<sup>20</sup>

This is not something that has gone unnoticed. Other reports have suggested the development of new zones (e.g. Accelerator Zones, that give incentives to University-led innovation zones). What is most important is building on existing successful models and ensuring that the collaboration, chance meetings and sharing of ideas that make existing clusters a success are amplified and echoed across the UK. Given the importance of digital to our future global competitiveness, it is also essential that any emerging zones have the right digital infrastructure and support.

**Catapults - supporting innovation and growth**

The UK’s network of catapults support innovative businesses of all sizes to scale up through providing a range of services around infrastructure, technology, and support in testing and demonstrating. They have collectively engaged in over 14,000 collaborations with industry since 2013. The Catapults receive around a third of their funding in core grants through central government, a further third from collaborative funding bids, and a third by selling their services to the private sector.

One example of their impact is the Energy Systems Catapult Living Lab - a real world test environment of 100 digital homes to help innovative firms test new solutions with real customers. This included AirEx, a company using an intelligent air brick to provide smart ventilation controls which help to deliver warmer homes, lower bills, and better indoor air quality. This support was instrumental in helping AirEx scale their business by increasing their turnover five fold and doubling their number of employees. Longer term - up to 40 million homes across Europe could benefit from using their innovation.

Source: Catapult Network and House of Lords Technology Committee<sup>25</sup>

**Recommendation: The Government should commit to the development of ‘Catapult Quarters’ to create new poles for innovation, productivity growth and the foundations of Global UK.**

- A) **Increase the number of and funding for Catapults, in order to deliver national and local Prosperity Plans.** Funding could match Fraunhofer Institutes in Germany, meaning a core grant that was around £500 million larger. We could expect this would unlock around another £500 million in private R&D investment, in line with their ‘thirds’ model.
- B) **The Government should commit to the development of ‘Catapult Quarters’ to create new poles for innovation and productivity growth.** These should provide a number of incentives, including relaxations on skilled immigration, capital gains tax incentives and simplified planning rules. To ensure alignment, granting of these zones should be reliant on a business case, that is supported by local government, businesses, citizens and a higher education institution. It should also demonstrates how the Quarter fits within a Local Prosperity Strategy and how they will collaborate with and work alongside Freeports and existing University-led Innovation Districts.
- C) **Support the Digital Catapult to establish a centre in each Catapult Quarter,** so that it is providing “localised and tailored services” in all parts of the UK, to supercharge innovation, investment and business growth.

Source for Catapult Quarters: CBI<sup>25</sup>



# 2. Investing together in the skills of the future

The UK has a long term and significant skills problem that needs to be addressed. A range of evidence suggests that skills gaps in digital, management and STEM are likely to grow so that, by 2030:<sup>27</sup>

- Around five million UK workers are likely to be acutely under skilled in basic digital skills, with up to two thirds facing some level of under-skilling in this area.
- 2.1 million workers are likely to be acutely under-skilled in at least one core management skill; and
- 1.5 million workers are likely to be acutely under-skilled in at least one STEM workplace skill.

**“Skills mismatches in 2030 put at risk economic output of around £120 billion.”**

Learning and Work Institute<sup>35</sup>

The impacts of this are significant. Businesses regularly rate skills shortages as being one of the biggest barriers to growth.<sup>28</sup> Academic research for the OECD suggests that the UK’s productivity performance would improve by 5% if it could reduce levels of skills mismatches to those of high performing nations.<sup>29</sup> Low skills are also a significant contributor to differences in regional and local productivity and a driver of poverty.<sup>30,31</sup>

**“...the single biggest constraint to our evolution (having created more net new jobs in the UK than any other UK founded organisation in the past 20 years) is talent and skills availability.”**

Manoj Badale, co-founder, Blenheim Chalcot

Business can and should play a key role here, but is underutilised at present. As such, business and government working in partnership will be central to ensuring that the skills pipeline delivers what is required for a prosperous future. As we’ve outlined - the degree of partnership and coordination required to deliver this is best done at a more local level, and skills needs to be a package of things that MCAs and Unitary Authorities work with the conveying power of Local Prosperity Partnerships to deliver.

Within this, the Commission’s work has focussed on part of the skills pipeline: lifelong learning. The reasons for this are clear. Firstly, the pandemic has caused significant economic disruption across the UK and, despite extensive Government support, many have lost their jobs. And these impacts have hit those with the lowest skills hardest, including disadvantaged groups with an existing over-representation of low skills (for example, young people, those with disabilities and those from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background). These groups also face the risks of further long-term scars to their economic prospects.

**“...early evidence indicates that young people have been worse affected by the economic impact [of Covid-19] than older people...ethnic minority groups and disabled people have been worse affected and are at greater risk of future unemployment than other groups.”**

EHRC written submission to the Commission

Supporting those most affected by the pandemic to find work and retrain where necessary will be vital in both ensuring that they are not further disadvantaged and supporting the transition to the jobs of the future. This is particularly important as these impacts deepen existing deficits in skills and training that are a significant driver of inequality. A key example is that workers with a degree are around three times more likely to participate in job-related training than those without a qualification. Together this contributes to a labour market that is neither as diverse or inclusive as it could be.<sup>32</sup>

**“Another area of weakness is diversity and inclusion. There is a need to make work more inclusive, reduce discrimination and create more opportunities for people in under-represented or disadvantaged groups in the labour market. ”**

CIPD written submission to the Commission

Secondly, digitisation and decarbonisation have the potential to create new jobs, reduce the need for others and significantly change skills requirements across the country; and all in the next decade. This necessitates a shift to a new norm of lifelong learning in the UK workforce, and this is a major gap in government policy at present.

**80%**

of the 2030 workforce is already in the workforce today, meaning that meeting new needs will largely be about ensuring that those already in the workforce retrain, develop and build the skills they need.<sup>36</sup>





**Tackling this will require significant action and the first challenge is making current policies deliver better.**

The Apprenticeship Levy came into effect in 2017. As businesses, we support the need to invest in skills. However, the narrow focus of the £2bn a year levy has led to many employers being unable to invest in the skills gaps

they identify within their workforces. Combined with a range of issues including complexity and inflexibility this has led to employer funded off-the-job training in England falling by £2.3bn between 2017 and 2019. Those aged under 24 have been particularly hard hit and the CIPD also highlight that funding arrangements have failed SMEs.<sup>33</sup>

**“The Apprenticeship Levy has failed on every measure and will undermine investment in skills and economic recovery without significant reform.”**

**It is crucial employers have more flexibility over how they use their levy funding so they can use it to provide other forms of accredited training and skills development as well as apprenticeships.”**

CIPD<sup>37</sup>

Between 2016/17 and 2019/20:

- Apprenticeship starts have fallen by more than 170,000.
- Apprenticeships going to under 19s have fallen by nearly 50,000.
- Apprenticeships going to 19-24 year-olds has fallen by nearly 50,000.

Source: CRC analysis of CIPD

**Recommendation: Make the Apprenticeship Levy work by increasing flexibility and business control**

The Government should launch a review on expanding the scope of and replacing the Apprenticeship Levy, working with business groups and other stakeholders. This should include allowing the funds to be spent on all - or a subset of - other types of accredited training. It should also specifically consider how a portion of the funds can be ringfenced for spending by non levy paying SMEs, to increase starts amongst particular groups, including those aged under 24 and areas where the largest skills gaps have been identified (e.g. digital).

This approach is supported by a range of bodies including the CIPD, IoD, CBI and others, and would allow the levy to be spent on other forms of accredited training in addition to apprenticeships.

If we are to make lifelong learning a reality, we also need to ensure that individuals are empowered to retrain. This sentiment is behind the Government’s own recent proposed reforms around a Lifetime Skills Guarantee.<sup>34</sup> However, while the Government has the right idea here, there are a number of barriers that are not addressed. For example:

- **Complexity** - the new scheme adds to the existing patchwork of provision which is already hard to engage with and understand.

- **Gaps in provision** - funding mechanisms are biased towards full-time learning and first qualifications at a specific level. The shifting nature of our economy means that modular and repeat learning at the same level are likely to be needed in future.

For these reasons, we believe that the Government needs to be bolder and set the UK on a course to ensure that people’s skills remain relevant and up-to-date throughout their lifetimes and that, as a country, our skills can support the globally competitive industries of the future.

**“We need policies that send the message that people have the permission to learn.... double down on the UK’s reputation as a brilliant place for upskilling and reskilling”**

Kathryn Parsons, Decoded

To deliver this we believe we can build on international examples of Individual Learner Accounts (ILAs). For example, the Singaporean ‘SkillsFutureCredit’ has been highly successful in increasing training participation rates (see box). This is partly because it also incentivises employers to contribute to the accounts and ‘co-invest’ with workers and government, a similar approach in the UK would

see ILAs working together with a reformed Apprenticeship Levy. With this in mind, the introduction and detailed design of the ILA should be developed by the Government and business, alongside the review of the Apprenticeship Levy. This would provide a simple way of allowing people to access training in what is a highly complex system, and take decisions about what fits their needs at a specific point

**Recommendation: Introduce Individual Learner Accounts (ILAs) to make lifelong learning a reality**

Alongside the review of the Apprenticeship Levy, the Government and business should work together to develop an Individual Learner Account that can be used to fund any Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) accredited course over someone’s lifetime. Details, including focus and targeting would need to be worked up as part of the review. One way it could function is that all citizens are provided with an account at the age of 25, and this is also topped up at a later point of their career. A pot of money worth £10,000 over a lifetime has previously been proposed and costed at £1.9 billion a year to the Government.

It could be complemented by expanding the Government’s new loan scheme to cover the cost of maintenance required while any studying is undertaken, and supported by a reformed Apprenticeship Levy.



**Example:** Singapore's Skillsfuture platform provides government funded reskilling learning journeys created in collaboration with EdTech firms



**Context**

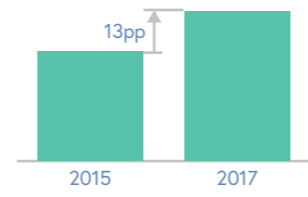
SkillsFuture initiative was introduced in 2014 to support Singapore's next stage of economic advancement by providing lifelong learning and skills development opportunities for Singaporeans

**Approach**

Singapore's SkillsFuture platform was set up through a PPP between public and private sector to upskill and reskill Singaporeans. The platform includes 3-6 month long-learning journeys funded by the government.

**Impact**

Uptake: 13 percentage point rise in training participation rates since launch



Source: McKinsey & Company

in time.

To be effective in boosting prosperity, these policies need to close the skills gaps faced by disadvantaged groups. They also need to be tailored to local areas, to ensure they deliver on Local Prosperity Strategies. In part, this can be considered as part of the review of the Apprenticeship Levy and design of Individual Learner Accounts recommended

above. It also needs to be reflected in the support the Government already provides to people struggling to find work. At the moment, this is almost solely focussed on job search within the range of skills and experience the individual already has. This should be turned around to ensure that the focus is on equipping people with the skills they (and business) need to deliver on Local Prosperity Strategies.

**Recommendation: Use the design of a new Apprenticeship Levy and Individual Learner Accounts and Jobcentre Plus support to close skills gaps amongst disadvantaged groups.**

As part of the review of the design of the new Apprenticeship Levy and Individual Learner Accounts, consider how variations in funding and eligibility could be used to provide more support to disadvantaged groups (e.g. providing a "top up" to specific groups like young people) or to meet specific needs identified in Local Prosperity Strategies.

Refocus Jobcentre Plus support to ensure that unemployed people without the skills needed to succeed in their local economy, are supported to use their Individual Learner Accounts to retrain and upskill.

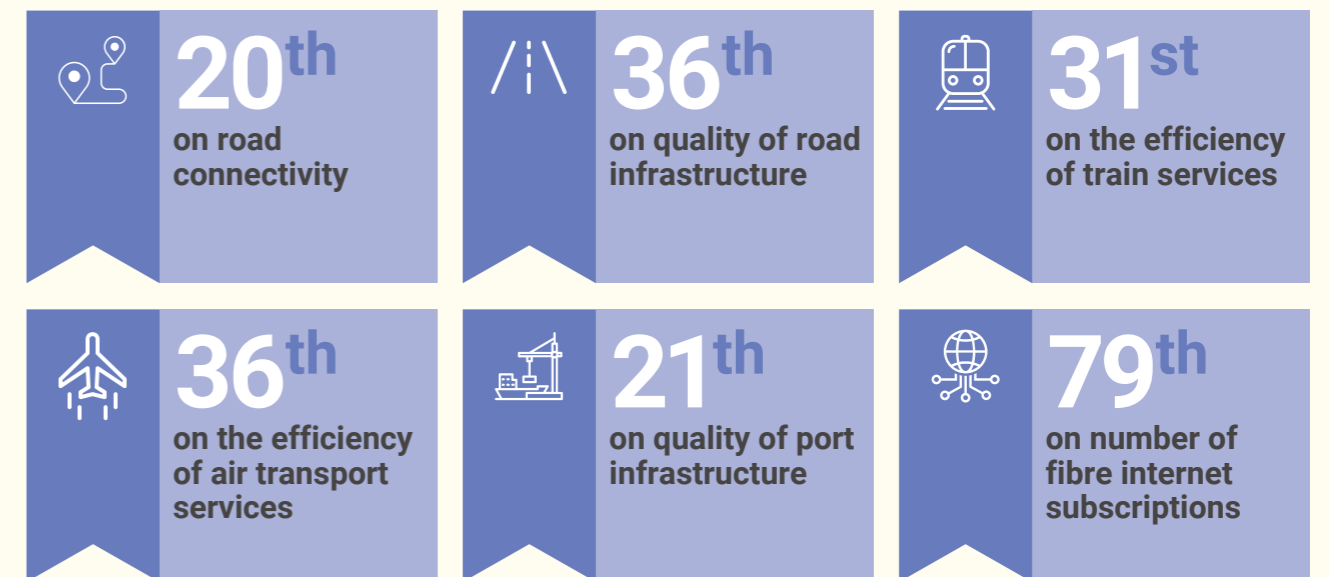
# 3. Investing in and delivering world class infrastructure

Throughout the course of the Commission's discussions with businesses, our Policy Panel and Advisory Group, a consistent theme was that the right infrastructure is central to our ambitions on global competitiveness, growth, net zero and levelling up.

These discussions also revealed concerns with the state of the UK's infrastructure and the politicisation and associated delays with delivery that this causes. Across areas of traditional transport and digital infrastructure, these problems are apparent in the relatively poor performance in the WEF's global competitiveness report. And, since 2014, confidence ratings by the Infrastructure Projects Authority on the delivery of infrastructure projects have fallen steadily; there are less projects that are labelled as highly likely to deliver successfully and more projects that are "unfeasible" or "in doubt".<sup>38</sup>

It is also apparent that the UK's critical infrastructure should not just be regarded as transport, connectivity and utilities. For example, our health system has worked exceptionally hard during the pandemic and significant new investments are needed to ensure the NHS can build back better, addressing our poor diagnostic capabilities, poor performance in cancer (where survival is below average across all major cancers) and high burden of long-term conditions (accounting for 70% of hospital bed days).

The UK is seriously lagging behind a range of other nations in terms of its infrastructure performance across several categories:



Source: World Economic Forum





More broadly, a vital part of our critical infrastructure is the business supply chain, particularly in terms of manufacturing. A combination of increased global competition, a lack of a domestic focus on innovation in technology and processes, as well as falling support for and investment in technical education have led to an erosion of the UK supply chain over the past 30 years, with much of this moving offshore.<sup>39</sup> This issue also came sharply into focus through the pandemic and the UK's exit from the European Union. Both have laid bare the importance of developing resilient UK-based supply capability.

### Delivering globally competitive national infrastructure

Turning this around and improving our core national infrastructure could bring serious economic benefits. The right kind of infrastructure investment in the right places can have high multiplier effects (1.5-2.7),<sup>40</sup> leading to increased employment and output and contributing to levelling up.<sup>41</sup>

**“Digital connectivity is a foundation for growth, but is about more than just access to excellent broadband - digital networks underpin much of the critical national infrastructure and will have to become smarter, as well as have increased capacity, to enable our net zero transition.”**

Ian Funnell, UK and Ireland CEO Hitachi ABB

Here, the Government has already committed to investment. However, the current remit for investment set for the National Infrastructure Commission (between 1% and 1.2% of GDP) is too wide. To see why, we only need to consider the gap between the two figures: spending 1% of

GDP on infrastructure rather than 1.2% between 2020 and 2030 would mean £50bn less investment; an amount that the Government is willing to invest and should commit to investing to ensure that our national infrastructure supports our vision of a global competitiveness.

#### Recommendation: Create a 1.2% GDP spending floor on national infrastructure

The Government should commit to a spending floor of 1.2% of GDP on infrastructure, rather than a target of between 1% and 1.2%. Any underspend should be ring fenced and devolved to regional / sub regional bodies to invest.

Alongside issues with investment, a continued theme raised by stakeholders was a failure to deliver the right projects at the right time whilst ensuring value for money. This echoed previous research from a range of bodies including the Institute for Government and the Institute for Civil Engineers, which have highlighted the need for improvements in project selection, decision making and delivery.

In this respect, two potential solutions have repeatedly been put forward. The first is providing the National Infrastructure Commission with a firmer legal basis and stronger role in holding the Government to account on the delivery of infrastructure.

The second is to focus on tackling the major barrier presented by a lack of public support for major projects. Whilst there is not a “silver bullet” here, lessons can be

learned from approaches in other countries. For example, France has developed a much earlier and stronger role for public participation in decision making for major projects.

#### Recommendation: Increase accountability and collaboration to deliver needed infrastructure improvements more quickly.

Give the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) statutory underpinning and a clear role in reporting on progress against its pipeline proposals.

Give the NIC and Local Prosperity Partnerships a joint remit to create a “safe space” consultation process that brings the range of multiple stakeholders (including the public) to support the development and design of major projects.

### Example: France's CNDP was set up to guarantee public participation in the decision making processes of major projects



#### Context

The French Commission Nationale du Debat Public (CNDP) was founded in the late 1980s. In a similar context to that facing the UK now, there was declining central state power and well-organised local opposition to strategically important rail projects. In response, the French Government set up the CNDP, an independent non-governmental organisation, to ensure public participation in the decision-making processes of major infrastructure projects of national interest that present important socio-economic stakes. It was modelled to a significant degree on a body created in Quebec in 1978, which considers the environmental impacts of major public investment schemes, the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement (BAPE).

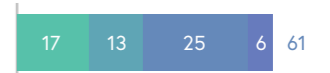
#### Approach

To do this, the CNDP hosts local public debates on contentious major projects as early as possible in their development. All participants - for or against a project - are given equal resources to make their cases. The CNDP then summarises these views in a report, to which project sponsors must respond. Key lessons: Giving the public a real say in policy and planning can be extremely effective. It can build consensus and productive dialogue around controversial subjects - giving a voice to supporters as well as opponents, and linking local discussions about need. Given the right resources and political commitment, the public are both interested and able to contribute to policymaking. Resources include the project owners files and its summary which citizens can use to find out more about the project and its challenges. To be effective, public engagement must happen early, consistently, and provide communities with a genuine opportunity to influence decisions.

#### Impact

Projects were subject to public debate spread around all regions of France and many sectors, though transport projects have been the most common type. Of the 61 projects on which the CNDP facilitated debates between 2002 and 2012, 38 were modified, including 25 that changed their plans based on options that emerged from the public debate.

Number of projects CNDP facilitated debates about



- Project broadly unchanged
- Project modified
- Project modified - new option chosen
- Project abandoned

Source: McKinsey & Company

### Using procurement to rebuild the Great British Supply Chain and boost productivity

experience is not always utilised in these processes. As a result, the delivery of projects suffers.

Another challenge identified by many organisations reflects the fact that procurement, commissioning and delivery of projects often sits within generalist silos in Government Departments, meaning the requisite expertise and



**“In departments, projects tend to be managed in isolation from each other, with too much focus on keeping budgets under control rather than contributing to the department’s objectives.”**

The Commission for Smart Government<sup>44</sup>

But it is not just delivery that suffers, as opportunities to deliver strategic priorities through the procurement process are also missed. The argument here is that, if we are going to be investing 1.2% of GDP a year in infrastructure, this investment needs to be used in a way that maximises the chances of delivery on the National Prosperity Plan. More generally, this point is true of all government spending.

Whether it be building schools, hospitals, roads or rail, or through procurement more generally, how the Government spends this money can have a really significant impact on whether we hit our collective goals. There are a number of areas where this might be important. They include how government spending can support the development of deeper UK supply chains; “pump prime” markets by providing the demand certainty needed for firms to invest,

innovate and deliver better and cheaper products; and help sectors become more productive, for example by moving to modern methods of construction.

One key example is building productivity by encouraging a move to off-site construction. Research has shown that the approach boosts productivity and comes with a range of other benefits including improved quality and reliability and better workforce safety. It also comes with a reduced environmental impact, compared to traditional construction methods. However, progress on take-up has been slow, despite the Government’s previous commitment in this area. Refocusing attention and public capital spend on this market could provide just the spur that the construction sector needs post pandemic, particularly in the areas most in need of levelling up.

**25%** Increasing the proportion of construction undertaken off site to 25% would significantly boost productivity and provide a huge economic boost to all regions outside of London. WPI Economics<sup>45</sup>

More generally, the National Prosperity Plan will demonstrate the key industries and technologies where the UK needs to become globally competitive. The Government can play a central role in spurring activity in these areas and speeding up innovation and crowding in private sector investment (see box).

In this respect, progress has been made in recent years, with reviews leading to changing practices and commitments around supply chains made in many of the sector deals.<sup>42</sup> There has also been significant professionalisation taking

place within the Civil Service, particularly within the Crown Commercial Service (CSS) and through the work of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA). This has come hand in hand with significant increases in training, a focus on improving project delivery and creation of large numbers of specialist delivery roles.<sup>43</sup>

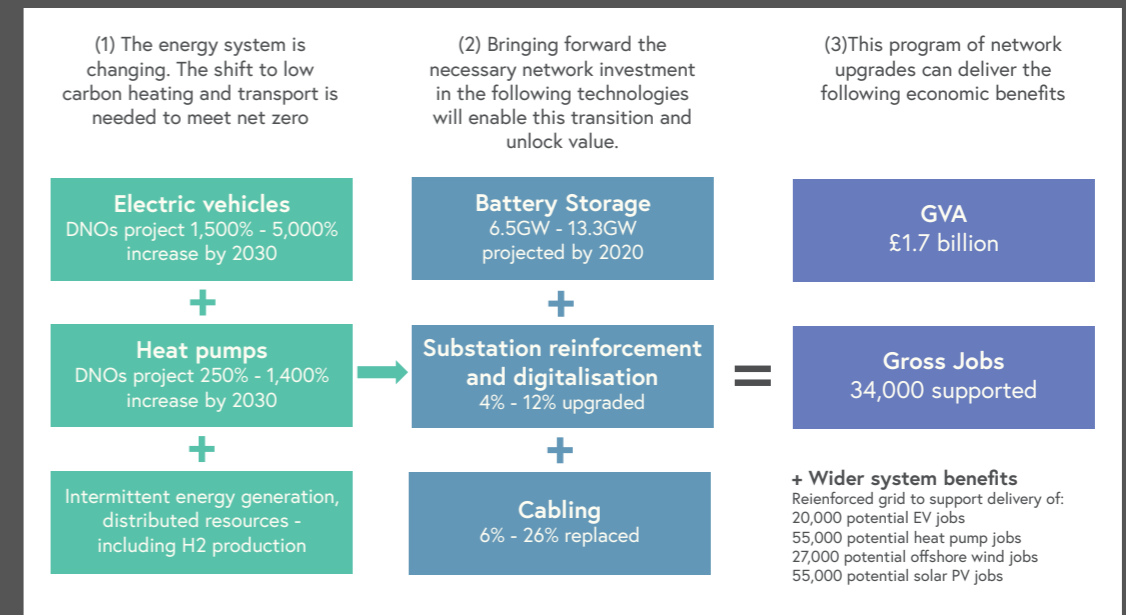
However, businesses and stakeholders we spoke to still believed that more could be done and, given the scale of the potential prize, we believe that more is needed to ensure that government can:

**Case study: Levelling up and increasing productivity by investing in the UK’s network**

One example of where the Government could use its spending and investment power to deliver on the National Prosperity Plan is supporting net zero through investment in the UK’s energy network. This is the key that brings together the UK’s world leading renewable energy power sources, such as offshore wind, with technologies which are essential to achieving net zero households such as electric vehicles and heat pumps. As well as delivering our essential objectives around decarbonisation, there is an opportunity for investment to also drive jobs, productivity growth, and develop supply chain resilience.

Analysis for Hitachi ABB Power Grids carried out by Ecuity quantified several of the key benefits of investing in several key upgrades to the UK’s Distribution network - these are set out below.

Substantial investment will also be required to develop the transmission network for offshore wind. The current National Grid ESO assessment is that £13.9bn of investment is needed to meet the target of 40 GW of offshore wind by 2030. While the UK is world leading in its usage of offshore wind, much of the supply chain is based overseas. In order to maximise the jobs potential of delivering net zero, and build resilience into our supply chain, there is a strong case for the UK adopting an objective to look to develop this capacity in the UK.



Analysis by Ecuity for Hitachi ABB Power Grids





- Develop the expertise and experience needed to run major projects from inception to delivery; and
- Use its significant buying power strategically, across all functions of government, to support the delivery of its wider economic and social objectives.

To deliver on this, we believe that the progress with the CCS and IPA could be built upon to create a central Government Consulting Service (GCS). The GCS would take on the existing functions of the CCS and IPA, and be set a clear remit to use government procurement and the delivery

**“...public sector commissioners must shift their focus away from short-term cost-reduction and place much greater emphasis on delivering long-term outcomes and generating social value through investment in infrastructure.”**

CBI<sup>46</sup>

of major projects to make progress against the National Prosperity Plan: in particular, to deepen UK supply chains, drive the innovation needed to deliver net zero and boost productivity.

To ensure this new team has access to skills and expertise it needs, we believe it should be given operational independence and sit outside of the Civil Service. This broad approach would follow the successful model adopted by

the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT - see box). The ambition for the GCS should be the same: building world class expertise to use procurement and the delivery of major projects to achieve the Government’s Prosperity Plan, then using this global competitiveness to tap into markets in other countries. Once the GCS has been built, this would also allow the Government to rethink the current scale and nature of its use of external consultancies.

**Building globally competitive government advice: the Behavioural Insights Team**

The Behavioural Insights Team (also known as the Nudge Unit) was established a decade ago at the heart of government in order to generate and apply behavioural insights to inform policy, improve public services and deliver results for citizens and society.

It has grown from a seven-person team within the Civil Service, to a global social purpose company with offices around the world, and is jointly owned by the UK Cabinet Office, innovation charity Nesta and its employees.

Employees are drawn from a range backgrounds including ex-civil servants, policy specialists and academics from disciplines including behavioural economics, social psychology, neuroscience and anthropology.

Its work spanned 31 countries in the last year alone, clearly demonstrating the global competitiveness of its expertise and advice.

**Recommendation: Create the Government Consulting Service - a social purpose company owned by the Government that is focussed on using government procurement and major projects to deliver the National Prosperity Plan.**

Inject the skills and experience needed to use procurement and project delivery strategically by creating the Government Consulting Service (GCS). This should be run as a social purpose company, part owned by the Government and employees and paid by results for government contracts. It would build on and combine the progress already made by the CCS and IPA to work hand-in-hand with departments on procurement and the development, planning and delivery of major projects.

**Recommendation: Give the GCS the remit to use procurement and major project delivery strategically to support the National Prosperity Plan and development of the Great British Supply Chain.**

There are a number of areas where this should focus. Three immediate priorities should include:

- Deepening and maturing the market for digital solutions to decarbonising commercial buildings by committing to using smart technology to decarbonise the public sector estate.
- Pushing forward digital transformation in the NHS, including by ensuring that all new hospitals are equipped to reach the highest level of digital maturity, investing in delivering 5G across care settings, and accelerating progress towards integrated care records to improve patient care and power cutting edge research and innovation.
- Supporting and deepening the emerging focus on modern methods of construction, including off-site construction. This could be a particular focus of the Government’s capital investment (e.g. schools) and infrastructure delivery, where steps have already been made to move construction offsite.





# 4. Decarbonising energy demand to deliver net zero

Delivering on net zero will fundamentally change the way our economy works and how we lead our lives. This presents a challenge, but it also provides an opportunity to develop globally competitive clusters, built around a strong UK supply chain, focussed on green growth and exporting to the rest of the world. This year's COP26 summit provides an opportunity for the UK and UK businesses to demonstrate commitment to decarbonising our economy, showcase the UK's ambitious plans and drive international collaboration on decarbonisation topics that play to the UK's existing strengths.

## Building on successful policy initiatives, learning from what has not worked

There is already a good deal of work happening in government and business to support this agenda and, in some areas, the UK's progress to date has been impressive. For example, decarbonisation of the power sector is well underway with emissions associated with power generation having fallen 65% since 1990,<sup>47</sup> and the UK is already a leader in offshore wind. The future also looks positive, with recent research

suggesting that £60 billion of private investment could lead to more than 40,000 jobs being created in the next five years alone.<sup>48</sup>

However, there is still much to be done. In particular, while the UK has made significant progress in decarbonising energy generation, progress in many other areas has been limited - emissions from buildings have remained largely static since 2014, and there has been no reduction in emissions from surface transport since 1990.<sup>49</sup>

# 75%

Significant investment and innovation and collaboration between industry, government and research, has led to costs of offshore wind falling by almost 75% in less than a decade.<sup>55</sup>

**"If we're going to tackle climate change then we will have to change the way we live our lives, from the way we heat our homes to how we travel to work. It is going to be a big ask of people, and I can't stress this enough – we've got to take people with us."**

Simon Alcock, Client Earth

In part this means that, as the next stages of decarbonisation are taken forward, we need to build on the success we have already had in decarbonising energy and extend this to other areas. A central characteristic has been clarity over support, conditions and policy over a ten-year horizon, provided by the Government. Replicating on this success and providing greater certainty, clarity and support would mean that delivering on net zero can provide a real opportunity for the UK's future economic strength.

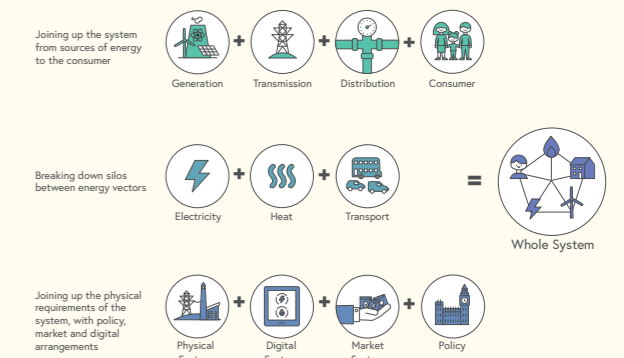
While we can build on existing successes, future challenges such as switching to EVs, powering aircraft with Sustainable Aviation Fuels, changing our approach to household waste and decarbonising the heating of homes and buildings will all mean people and businesses changing behaviour and buying and investing in new products. This will require a step change in approach and we need to acknowledge that so far, policies in this area have largely been ineffective at driving the results that we need. For example, the recent high-profile failure of the Green Homes Grant comes at the end of a long line of similar failures, including the Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation. There are a number of lessons that can be learned from these failures, including.<sup>50</sup>

- **The consumer is king** - customer experience and lack of appetite for change has been one of the largest barriers. We need to understand it and address the key barriers head-on.
- **Long-term thinking is needed** - clarity over the long-term policy environment is needed for the private sector to commit to the investment needed and develop the skills, capability, business models and supply chains required to deliver. Policies, such as the Green Homes Grant, have lacked long-term finance, focus and political buy in.
- **Whole Systems thinking is required** - different elements of net zero policy need to be connected to each other (e.g. heat networks with retrofit, electric

vehicles with the distribution network) and also with the wider environment. Without these links, failures in one area can undermine progress everywhere else. To tackle this, "whole systems thinking" is needed.

- **Technology should play a major role** - for example we know that smart technology and Internet of Things (IoT) have the potential to significantly improve the energy efficiency of buildings, including through improved measurement.<sup>51</sup>

## What is whole systems thinking?



Source: Energy Systems Catapult<sup>56</sup>

## Working together to support consumer choice

Turning this around will require a partnership between industry and government to build understanding and support, and deliver the investment and innovation needed to provide the right products and services at a price consumers and businesses can afford.

To understand how this might fit together, the Commission has focussed on the issue of decarbonising homes. This is one of the major challenges that we will face in reaching net zero. There are already opportunities for progress, with low carbon heating, high performance fabrics and smart Internet of Things (IoT) devices already reducing emissions across the existing building stock. However, progress to date has been slow.

**"Right now there's no market for it really [low carbon retrofitting], we do 30,000 a year at the moment, and we need to do 30,000 homes a week to get to net zero."**

Guy Newey, Energy Systems Catapult



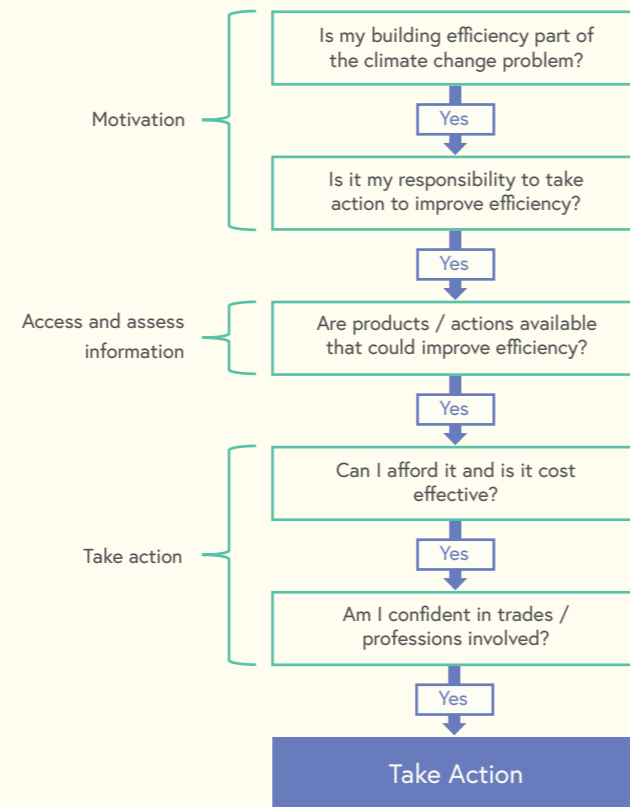
The key challenge is that delivering on heating efficiency will mean households taking up measures to reduce emissions as well as changing behaviour. While we know relatively little about the drivers of and barriers to households taking this action, lessons could be learnt from other areas including other fields of climate adaptation.<sup>52</sup>

Applying similar thinking suggests that at each stage of decision making, there are barriers which make it likely that households do not take action. Viewed like this, it is obvious why decarbonisation of domestic buildings requires collaboration:

- Households need to be seen as consumers and engaged with accordingly. They need to be supported to understand the role of their homes in getting to net zero and that they have choices available to improve the situation. This will take clear and consistent communication from government, professions and trades and trusted voices like Citizen's Advice and Which?.
- Taking action will require investment and innovation from business to ensure that the right products, at the right price and quality, are available to install. This innovation and investment requires an enabling policy and regulatory environment set by the Government and a clear understanding of the future policy pathway.
- Households will need to have confidence in professions who assess what might be needed in their home and the trades responsible for installing the products. This relies on the actions of business, as well as regulatory action from the Government.<sup>53</sup>

This all means that success will hinge on the effective delivery of major actions from both business and households, supported by the Government. To coordinate this, a National Deal on net zero Homes is needed. This should outline what we need to ask of business and households and the quid pro quo, or what local and central government can provide in return to support this action.

### Steps in the journey to households taking on energy efficiency measures



Source: Adapted from SMF

### A National Deal delivered locally

Brought together in the right way, this National Deal on net zero Homes would support significant investment and innovation opportunities, support business creation and growth (particularly amongst SMEs, that provide the majority of home energy efficiency installations) and deliver huge jobs potential throughout the UK.

However, whilst much can be delivered nationally, the challenges and opportunities faced by specific localities is very different. This means that tailored and localised approaches will be needed and these will have to look across the full range of changes and associated implications. In this respect, there is already precedent for the much needed "whole systems thinking" in Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP). These have been championed by the Energy Systems Catapult and successfully trialled in Manchester, Newcastle and Bridgend.

### Recommendation: As part of its approach to decarbonising the economy, develop the National Deal for Net Zero Homes - a 15 year pathway to decarbonisation of the housing stock and contribution to the low-carbon jobs transition:

Work with households to determine the barriers to decarbonising homes; secure a commitment from industry to solve those challenges with government providing the long-term funding and policy environment needed to enable them to invest.

A key part of this will be to provide Local Prosperity Partnerships the remit and funding to bring together households, business and government to inform the negotiation. Activity will need to involve:

Citizens' Juries to establish views about the various trade offs involved in the net zero transition in order to come to a consensus to create long-term policy support;

Significant research into the behavioural barriers that exist to households taking action, and how these can be addressed; and

Work with business to understand the policy and funding framework needed for the necessary innovation and investment to deliver the decarbonisation of buildings (investment, data availability regulation, private finance models).

Emerging evidence shows that delivery at a local level allows for better coordination across multiple aims and with all stakeholders. The approach also allows specific areas to build up the skills, expertise, and supply chains needed to address the challenge, and encourage long termism through creating a sense of ownership of that strategy with local people and businesses.

To build on this, the Commission believes that the roll out of Local Area Energy Planning should play a central role in delivering on the National Plan for net zero Homes, and delivering net zero more broadly.

### Recommendation: Roll out Local Area Energy Plans

A central part of the development and delivery of the National Deal on Net Zero homes should be built around the rollout of the Local Area Energy Plans (LAEP) developed by Energy Systems Catapult. This will allow specific areas to build up the skills, expertise, and supply chains needed to address the challenge, and encourage long termism through creating a sense of ownership of that strategy with local people and businesses.

To facilitate this, the Government and regulator should work with the Energy Systems Catapult, industry, local policymakers and existing trial areas to scope and deliver the policy and regulatory framework, package of financial support and tools that will be needed for LAEPs to be delivered effectively.





### Laying the foundations for change

Developing and delivering the National Deal on Net Zero Homes will take time. As this is developed, we believe that there are three areas of immediate action that can be taken forward. These are needed to ensure both that we have the right information and data to plan and implement the needed building modifications and to develop financial models for

delivering deep retrofitting of homes, that do not place undue burdens on families on lower incomes. Importantly, action is also needed to ensure that the Government can act as a catalyst to the market - providing firms the certainty needed to enter the market and invest and innovate. This approach should build on the successful combination of long-term commitments and competitive processes that successfully reduced the costs of offshore wind.<sup>54</sup>

#### Recommendation: Modernise energy performance certificates (EPCs)

At present, EPCs are a completely flawed method of measuring building energy efficiency, and need to be replaced by solutions that more accurately measure the actual performance of a building, as opposed to its modelled performance. Having an accurate measure of energy efficiency is a fundamental prerequisite to improving it.

#### Recommendation: Explore the creation of a Green Homes Bond

This social-impact bond would provide upfront funding for homes to be retrofitted in return for a long-term commitment to a share of the benefits from this. These would include a share of the expected flow of energy bill savings. Other benefit flows could also be explored, including reduced Council Tax for energy efficient homes funded through the Green Homes Bond.

#### Recommendation: Government to commit to retrofitting all social homes by 2030.

To catalyse action, scale the market and incentivise firms to innovate and reduce costs, the Government should commit to a competitive process for financing the retrofit all council-owned homes by 2027. This would pave the way for a requirement for all social homes to meet EPC band C by 2030 and all private homes by 2035.

## 5. Building personal and community resilience

A fundamental part of the Government's National Prosperity Plan must be to ensure that the creation of globally competitive industries, and delivery on net zero can be leveraged to improve outcomes for people and families across the UK. In this respect, recommendations throughout this report have been about creating economic foundations through which all people and communities can prosper. However, given the scale of the inequalities and challenges highlighted by the Commission and the challenges that lie ahead, we also see a distinct role for business and government to work together to directly build financial resilience, support wellbeing and strengthen communities.

Action by business can only ever be part of the solution. Improving mental and physical health, finances and community resilience will take action across a wide range of public services and continued support through the UK's social security system. But, as our second report highlighted, businesses do have a significant role to play both as employers and investors and through their physical footprint in communities up and down the UK.

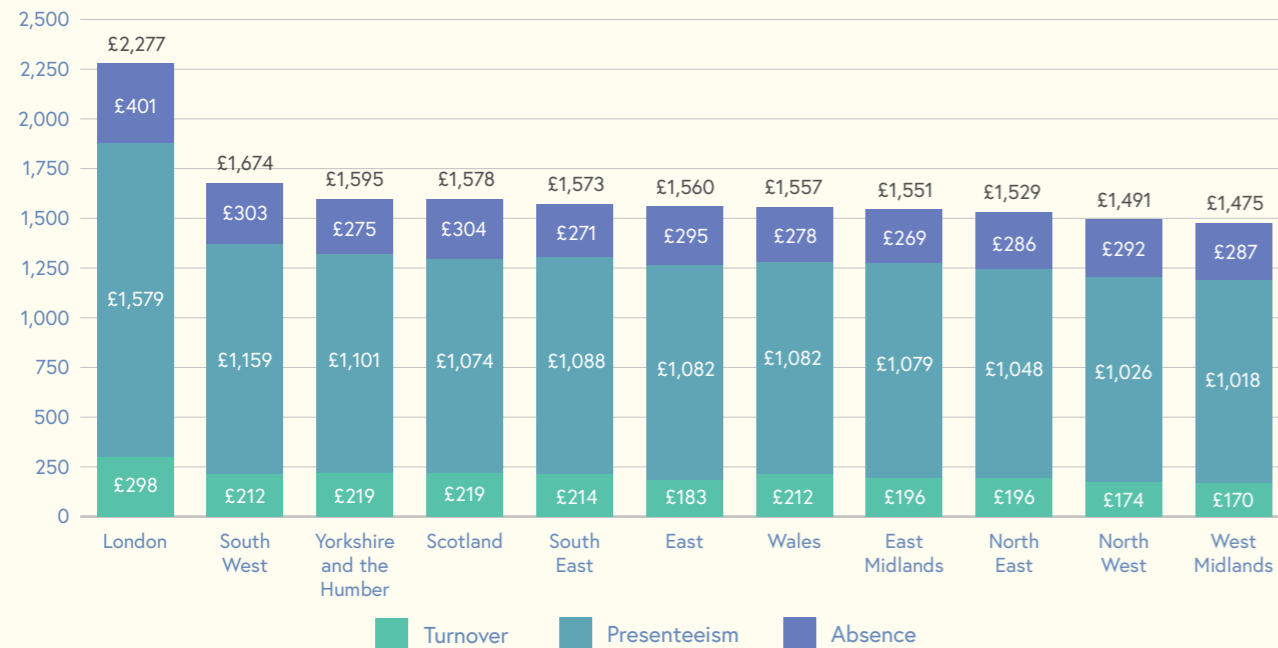
It is also clear that using this role to build personal and community resilience is good for people and good for business. And the size of the prize is significant. Alone, the business costs of poor mental health amongst UK employees are estimated as being up to £45bn a year and spread right across the country. And erosion of community infrastructure has contributed to economic and social decline in some of the most deprived areas of the country.

**"[prior to the pandemic] there were some fairly serious weaknesses. Those weaknesses affected workers, families, and communities – but also affected our national productivity and our national resilience."**

Helen Barnard, JRF



### Annual costs per employee to employers of poor mental health



Source: Deloitte<sup>62</sup>

### Encouraging collaboration and coordination in building resilience

A large number of businesses, including Commissioner's organisations, already play a key role. The Commission's second report highlighted some of the good work that firms undertake to support the wellbeing of their employees, volunteer in their local communities, invest in skills and provide support for disadvantaged groups. However, while firms are committed to doing more, many struggle to develop the initiatives needed because of their scale, capacity and knowledge (particularly SMEs).

Commissioners also highlighted that, even for larger firms, understanding how to maximise their investments in local communities and groups across their large geographic footprints can be difficult. This leads to a situation where time and money invested across multiple firms in the same area can lack strategic direction. Tackling this by developing a stronger collaboration with local communities (to understand what is needed) and increasing cooperation with other businesses and government (to dial-up impact) could lead to significantly improved effectiveness.

To deliver this, we believe that all Local Prosperity Strategies should include a Social Value Plan, which identifies priority areas for investment in community and social infrastructure,<sup>57</sup> specific populations and programmes where support would make the most impact. These strategies could then act as the guiding light for all businesses in the area looking to invest financially or in kind.

Alongside this, we also welcome the Government's commitments over the last year around investment in social infrastructure and deprived places. To build on this, we believe there is merit in setting up a long-term endowment fund to invest in community infrastructure. To ensure this builds on the principles of collaboration between government, business and local communities, businesses should be able to bid into the fund for match funding for their investments in delivering on local Social Value Plans.

### Recommendation: Local Prosperity Partnerships should work with local communities to develop Social Value Plans

that, as part of each area's Local Prosperity Strategy, outline where and how investment in social infrastructure could help to deliver a stronger, fairer and more resilient economy. These plans could then form the guiding light for local businesses seeking to invest (financially or in kind) in their local communities.

### Recommendation: Government should introduce a Community Infrastructure Endowment Fund, that businesses can apply for match-funding from.

Building on the approach taken by the Government through the pandemic and recent Budget (and as recommended by Local Trust, Power to Change and Danny Kruger), the Government should develop an endowment to invest in social infrastructure. To support the investments that businesses make in their local communities, (where they have support from the LPP and projects fit with the Social Value Plan) businesses should be able to bid for match-funding from the fund for their investments in local communities.

### Strengthening the individual action on "good work" that businesses already take

Businesses also have a central role in directly supporting the health and wellbeing of their employees, through "good work". There are a range of dimensions to this, including the provision of opportunities for development and training and support for mental and physical health. There are a wide range of initiatives already targeted at aspects of "good work", diversity and inclusion. For example, these include good work standards set by political leaders in London and Scotland, requirements on social value in public sector procurement and schemes like Disability Confident, Investors in People and the Living Wage.

It is also becoming more and more recognised that growth, productivity and good work go hand in hand, and that a focus on building employee resilience should be a central part of the Covid recovery. The Scottish Government's approach to Green Ports is a recent example of this in practice, showing how a drive for "good work" can be combined with a coherent plan for national prosperity.

The foundation of all of these approaches is right. However, they are also disjointed, leaving businesses to engage with, understand and implement a number of different standards for different purposes, in different parts of the UK. This adds complexity and reduces the collective impact that the approach could make. We believe that clarity should be provided through a single Good Work Standard, outlining minimum expectations for businesses of different sizes and examples of how companies could, if they want to, go further. To support the roll out of the standard, Government should consider how it can use its procurement practices to encourage take up.



### Scottish Government's Green Ports agenda

A green port is a large zoned area within a defined boundary which includes a rail, sea or airport. Green port operators and businesses in the zone can benefit from a package of tax and customs incentives. The model is designed to be an exemplar of Scotland's values and ambitions so that it not only boosts innovation and inclusive growth within communities, but also delivers Fair Work First practices, upholds the highest environmental protections and contributes to a net zero economy.

To do so, the green port model requires operators and businesses benefitting from the package of incentives to:

- Adopt the Scottish Government's Fair Work First approach, including the real Living Wage;
- Adopt the Scottish Business Pledge;
- Commit to supporting sustainable and inclusive growth in local communities; and
- Contribute to Scotland's just transition to net zero.

Source: Scottish Government<sup>63</sup>

### Recommendation: Develop a national voluntary "Good Work Standard".

Building on work already taken in Scotland and London, the Government should work with business leaders to create a single standard that firms can voluntarily comply with. This would provide minimum expectations for businesses of different sizes, as well as guidance for what "best in class" looks like. We believe that there are strong merits of a UK-approach to this, with a single standard for all UK businesses.

### Recommendation: Government contracts, funding and incentives should be based around achieving minimum levels of compliance with the Good Work Standard.

Where businesses are enjoying incentives provided by central and local government, following the example set through the Scottish Government's Green Ports, they should be required to commit to achieving a level of performance above the minimum "good work" standard.

### Action on mental health

Prior to Covid, each year, one in four adults in the UK suffered from poor mental health and a wide range of sources have shown the significant challenges that the pandemic has presented for mental health. Overall, given the importance of this agenda, we believe that we should set a national mission to ensure that, by 2025 at the latest, everyone in the UK has access to support and resources to improve their mental health. This must be freely and immediately available.

Given the nature of the Commission, our focus has been on how business and government can work together to provide this support to employees. The Government has already taken action in this area. For example, the

Workplace Mental Health Support Service is available as part of Access to Work, and provides a free, confidential service for employees with depression, anxiety, stress or other mental health issues affecting their work.<sup>58</sup> However, a total of 21,000 people have accessed the scheme across the nine years it has been running: an average of less than 2,500 a year.<sup>59</sup>

Extending support to all employees will be a significant challenge, meaning that the answer will require a strategy to be developed between the Government, businesses and employees. And while investments in mental health have been shown to provide significant returns on investment for businesses, given the significant societal benefits that could be delivered, models of co-funding between business, employers and employees should be explored.

**"The results of our updated return on investment (ROI) analysis show a complex but positive case for employers to invest in the mental health of their employees, with a return of £5 for every £1 spent."**

Deloitte<sup>64</sup>

As well as supporting employees to access support when it is needed, there is a clear role for employers in ensuring that the workplace contributes to wellbeing. There is not going to be a single approach for all employers. Instead, what is needed is a clear national framework that gives employers the information and resources they need. To some extent this is already being delivered through *Mental Health at Work*<sup>60</sup> and the work of the Thriving at Work Leadership Council.<sup>61</sup> However, take up amongst businesses is relatively low both compared to the overall take-up needed to drive change and international comparators (around 10% of the workforce was covered by the Time to Change pledge - a precursor to *Mental Health at Work*, compared to around 25% of the workforce for *The Standard* in Canada workforce).

To tackle this, we believe the existing approach needs to be brought to the forefront of action on workplace health and wellbeing. This would require the Government, HSE, businesses and current providers of resources for business coming together behind *Mental Health at Work* and developing it so it can provide a one-stop-shop for businesses to understand their legal obligations and voluntary options for supporting wellbeing at work.





**Recommendation: Introduce the Wellbeing at Work Guarantee to support employees and employers to improve wellbeing at work.**

**Ensure that by 2025 all employees have access to immediate and costless support for their mental health.**

Given the scale of this challenge, the Government should work with businesses of all sizes to develop a strategy for this. It will need to consider:

- The range of services and modes of delivery that will need to be provided;
- Whether a voluntary approach will deliver the required take up by businesses, or whether some form of mandation will be required; and
- Whether mandatory, or voluntary, how can businesses, government and employees work together to fund the services that are needed.

**Build on Mental Health at Work to create a national Wellbeing at Work Standard**, supported by the HSE, businesses and health professionals. This should:

- Provide a summary of legal minimum requirements that firms of different sizes / in different circumstances need to fulfil, to ensure that burdens on SMEs are not too onerous.
- Provide a set of guidelines for what “best in class” would look like for firms of different sizes, different workplaces and different sectors. These would be voluntary, but would provide an evidence-based guide for businesses who want to do more.

**To increase the traction of the Wellbeing at Work Guarantee:**

- Government should provide a commitment to fund Wellbeing at Work and take up national campaigns.
- Government contracts could be subject to firms achieving the required “good” standards for firms of their size and nature.

# Conclusion

This report has built on the Commission’s first two reports to outline a significant package of policies that we want to work with the Government to develop further and deliver. We believe this joint action is needed to address the challenges of the past, tackle the impacts of the pandemic, make the most of the opportunities ahead and navigate future challenges. Of course, these are not the only things that will be needed. Our ambitions to create globally competitive industries, deliver net zero and build a fairer, more resilient economy that is driven by purposeful business, will require us to work together across many different areas.

In this respect, we hope that this report is just the start. As businesses we stand ready to work hand in hand with the Government and people to make our vision a reality. We hope that our work as a Commission can act as a catalyst for this to happen, because only by working together can we achieve the truly globally competitive Britain that we need to raise prosperity for people, families and communities right across the UK.



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