AUGUST 2026

A ROUTE TO GROWTH FOR THE NORTH:

25 YEARS OF MANCHESTER AIRPORT'S SECOND RUNWAY

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

CHRIS WOODROOFE

MANAGING DIRECTOR, MANCHESTER AIRPORT

It is my pleasure to introduce this report, which gives us an opportunity to reflect on the role Manchester Airport has played in the lives of so many different people over the last quarter of a century - and the opportunity for it to have an even greater impact in the years to come.

We talk a lot about being proud to connect the North and this study encompasses everything we mean by that.

Firstly, in the literal sense, we are genuinely proud to say we provide the connectivity that enables more than 32m people a year to get where they want to go, for business, leisure or to visit friends and family.

As you will read, it has been exciting to not just see overall passenger volumes increase, but also to offer people across the North routes to an ever-greater variety of destinations. As an airport that started life as a single wooden hut in 1938, to be able to say we now connect to countries accounting for 59% of the world's population and 75% of global GDP is amazing.

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Secondly, we are proud to be one of the institutions all parts of the region have in common - **the UK's global gateway in the North,** serving a two-hour catchment area incorporating more than 23m people, five national parks, eight Premier League football clubs and more than 40 universities.

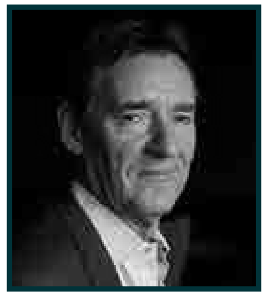
It is pleasing to have contributed to Northern city-regions becoming globally-recognised tourism destinations and hubs for high-value industries that our next generation will benefit from. To have supported the global success of exporters, from chain-makers and food producers to AI and cancer care specialists is truly an honour and their stories are inspirational, as you will read on these pages.

Finally, when we speak about connection, we also mean the pride we take from being part of the fabric of not only our home city, but the North as a whole: to be an asset that has been deliberately and strategically nurtured because of the **catalytic role we play in the economy and society at large.**

Those who had the vision and courage to back the original Runway 2 project deserve huge credit and it is that brand of public-private collaboration and growth-focussed ambition we have carried forward into our most recent investment, **the £1.5bn Manchester Airport Transformation Programme.**

For me, though, I think the most exciting thing about this report is what it says about the future. At a time when unlocking the full potential of every postcode in the UK has never been more important, **Runway 2 gives us the capacity to keep driving the North's growth as a globally competitive region**, in turn contributing to the economic success of the UK as a whole. **We look forward to working with all our partners to make that a reality.**

FOREWORD



LORD JIM O'NEILL

LIFE PRESIDENT OF THE NORTHERN POWERHOUSE PARTNERSHIP

Twenty-five years ago, the case for a second runway at Manchester was predicated on capacity and passenger forecasts. Reading this report, what strikes me is how much bigger the story has turned out to be.

It was a strategic decision about what kind of mega region the North wanted to become, and Greater Manchester's civic leaders got it right when plenty of others in similar positions did not.

From my involvement in the first Greater Manchester Independent Economic Review to the Cities Growth Commission which became the agenda of the Northern Powerhouse, I've long made the case for regional ambition, but the common thread is always the same. Places succeed when they know exactly what they're trying to achieve and back it consistently. Manchester Airport is one of the best examples of that approach in practice.

A decade on from developing the original Northern Powerhouse concept in the Treasury, we have made a good start on devolution, but the North still lacks sufficient fiscal powers to invest with the confidence that it will retain more of the economic uplift it creates. We still need greater investment in transport, schools and skills. Yet despite this, Greater Manchester's civic leaders took a long-term decision on infrastructure that other places would not have had vision to make.

Building Terminal 2 with £250 million of public capital, and then committing to a second runway on a decade-long timescale, were not easy decisions. They reflected a belief that that the airport is strategic infrastructure, not merely a transport asset. We are now seeing the fruits of that good judgement The airport now serves **32 million passengers a year**, offering connections to **over 200 destinations**. Greater Manchester has become the leading destination for foreign direct investment outside London, while the North West has continued to attract FDI during a time when the UK's has fallen. Investors in Asia and the Middle East have recognised the **value of international connectivity for a region**, often more readily than decisionmakers in London.

The North's only national airport, the Northern Powerhouse airport as it were, is an asset that benefits more than Greater Manchester alone. But that ambition needs to be matched by government investment in the transport links that connect the airport to the wider North. The 'ManSheffLeedsPool' corridor is showing consistent signs of economic momentum, yet the airport's potential catchment remains beyond easy reach. Northern Powerhouse Rail is the mechanism that changes that, nearly trebling the airport's public transport catchment and unlocking a broader route network in the process.

If our new Prime Minister is to hit their target for UK growth, we need higher productivity overall, and that means closing the North-South divide. International connectivity can make a meaningful contribution to that, and in Greater Manchester's case it already is. The missing piece is the railway that allows the rest of the North to share in those benefits.

"They reflected a belief that that the airport is strategic infrastructure, not merely a transport asset. We are now seeing the fruits of that good judgement."

FOREWORD

KEN O'TOOLE

MAG CEO

Airports are powerful economic catalysts. They support the employment of tens of thousands of people, meaning the communities immediately surrounding them receive a direct dividend.

They also provide the **connectivity that helps businesses trade internationally** and makes it easier for tourists, investors and students to get here. A thriving airport supports the development of an international perspective, rather than a parochial one. It reflects the ambition of a city - or region - to grow and the confidence to compete on the global stage.

It might sound obvious but it is direct connectivity - from an airport near to where you live or work - that is the most catalytic. When growing regions is integral to growing the UK, it's what makes airports not just regional catalysts, but **national assets.**

At MAG, we are proud to have airports that are economic dynamos in the North, South and Midlands. Together, they form a spine of economic activity that serves 70% of UK people and businesses. **In 2025 one in five of all passengers to or from the UK used one of MAG's airports.**

In Manchester, we have an airport that has had a symbiotic relationship with the economies of Greater Manchester and the wider North since it first opened in 1938. That has not happened by accident or good fortune - but by design. Through decades of public-private collaboration, it has consistently been recognised as an **infrastructure asset of critical importance.**

Successive investments ensured the airport maintained its market strength, could continue to grow and support the growth of the region it serves - but one stands out, in terms of the scale and longevity of its impact - **Runway 2.**

It is that investment that gave Manchester Airport the capacity to grow long into the future, enabling it to progressively build the route network it has today, with **direct connections to one third of the world's top 50 city economies.** Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Addis Ababa, Bangkok and many more all feature on Manchester's departures board, marking a shift from the holiday hotspots that dominated pre-2001.

It is also what made the case for the follow-on investments MAG has made in Manchester Airport, most notably our **£1.5bn Transformation Programme.** That has given us world-class facilities to match our destination list. Together, our investments and connectivity have grown Manchester Airport's own annual economic contribution to the North to **£9.5bn**, taking into account the **more than 100,000 jobs** it supports and the tourism and business productivity it enables.

But this story is about much more than runways and terminals. It is about the revitalisation of an economic region - and an opportunity to take that to the next level for the benefit of the country as a whole.

The catalytic impact of Runway 2 - and the connectivity it unlocked - is undeniable. **Trade, investment, tourism and knowledge exchange have all grown at rates in excess of the national average over the past 25 years,** as documented in this report. Importantly, that has not been contained to Greater Manchester but has spread into the wider North.

But Runway 2 is, in many ways, a metaphor for the North as a whole. It has delivered so much already, but that original investment made 25 years ago still has significant room for growth. Similarly, the North is unrecognisable to the one we saw in the 1990s and 2000s, but its potential is far from realised and the UK remains economically unbalanced.

At a critical juncture for our country, both are opportunities that must be grasped as our new Prime Minister seeks to deliver growth in every postcode.

Following through on commitments to Northern Powerhouse Rail will give the North a high-speed transport network that is commonplace in any other globally-significant economic region. Placing Manchester Airport at the heart of it, as planned, will capitalise on its runway capacity and attract yet more direct services to key global markets.

This connectivity is one of the key things high-value sectors need to thrive. Setting out a sustained plan to capitalise on the North's modern industrial strengths is what we look forward to seeing from the much-anticipated Northern Growth Strategy. **Delivering that with the same brand of visionary leadership that gave rise to Runway 2 can be the route to growth for both the North and the UK.**

"This story is about much more than runways and terminals. It is about the revitalisation of an economic region - and opportunity to take that to the next level for the benefit of the country."

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than 25 years on from the opening of Runway 2, it is evident that few infrastructure investments have shaped a regional economy as profoundly as Manchester Airport's expansion.

What began as a response to capacity constraints has become a wider story of economic transformation and of Greater Manchester backing an international gateway not simply as a transport asset, but as a foundational part of its growth model. That judgement has helped turn Manchester Airport into **Britain's largest airport outside London**, serving a record 32 million passengers in 2025 and connecting the North to more than 200 destinations worldwide.

Greater Manchester's economic turnaround has been remarkable. From the structural decline of the 1970s and 1980s, when the city lost a quarter of its jobs and its manufacturing base contracted sharply, the city-region has re-emerged as one of the strongest urban economies in Britain. At 3.1% annual growth sustained over the last ten years, Greater Manchester's economy has performed twice as well as that of Britain as a whole. Its recovery has been shaped by an interventionist model of civic leadership: using infrastructure, regeneration, housing and private-sector partnership to build density, connectivity and confidence. **Manchester Airport has been one of the most important levers in that model.** Time and again, local leaders turned to it to support the city-region's internationalisation and reposition it within a changing global economy. Much of this success was driven locally, often in the absence of a clear and consistent central government strategy for regional growth.

Connects to countries representing 75% of world GDP

Links directly to 50% of the global population

Direct flights to one-third of the world's top 50 cities

The last runway built anywhere in the UK

The impact has been substantial. Since Runway 2 opened, Manchester Airport has developed into a major international hub, supporting continued growth in leisure travel while expanding its role in long-haul and business connectivity. In 2025, it had direct flights to countries representing 59% of the world's population and 75% of global GDP. Long-haul passenger numbers have more than doubled from 3.1 million in 2000 to 6.5 million in 2025. Today, activity associated with Manchester Airport supports £9.5 billion in annual GVA and more than 100,000 jobs.

The benefits now reach well beyond the airport campus; supporting economic growth through four main channels: **inward investment, cross-border innovation, international trade and inbound tourism.** These benefits are especially important in high-value sectors such as advanced manufacturing, life sciences, digital and professional services, where global markets, talent, partners and face-to-face relationships are central to competitiveness, as explored in WPI's *Services Superpower* report.

Manchester Airport's expansion has been both a driver and a reflection of the wider transformation and increasing internationalisation of the North's economy, the evidence for which is visible across the North's trade and investment performance. **Goods trade in the North of England grew by 66% between 2008 and 2025**, outpacing the rest of England and London, while **services trade in the North West grew by 48% between 2016 and 2023, reaching £59 billion.** The North West's net inward FDI more than doubled over the past decade, **rising from -£2 billion in 2015 to £4.7 billion in 2024.** Greater Manchester has also become the **leading destination in Britain for foreign direct investment projects** outside London, with Manchester securing 659 greenfield projects between 2013 and 2025, **worth £10.2 billion.**

> *"Manchester Airport's expansion has been both a **driver** and a **reflection** of the wider transformation and increasing internationalisation of the North's economy"*

Similar trends can be seen across the North, from Leeds's internationally-focused financial and professional services sector to Liverpool's strengths in life sciences and advanced manufacturing, Sheffield's advanced engineering base, Newcastle's digital and energy clusters, and the Humber's emergence as a hub for offshore wind investment. What links these success stories is a growing dependence on international connectivity. As the North has become more globally connected, **Manchester Airport has evolved from a city airport into a strategic economic asset,** providing the long-haul links that enable businesses, investors and institutions across the region to engage directly with the world. Its connectivity has also **supported significant increases in international student numbers,** global academic research collaborations and inbound tourism.

The growth of Manchester Airport was delivered through a distinctive model of public-private partnership, demonstrating how strategic infrastructure can generate commercial success while still retaining a strong public interest mission through majority local authority ownership. Ahead of the 2013 acquisition of London Stansted airport for £1.5 billion, the ten local authorities of Greater welcomed on-board private investment from IFM Investors. Increasing both revenues and profit of MAG, this ensured greater returns to the ten boroughs, while also creating additional capacity for investment in major projects such as the £1.5 billion Manchester Airport Transformation Programme.

The Airport's growth has helped unlock a wider ecosystem of infrastructure, development and regeneration that has reinforced Greater Manchester's competitiveness. Investments in road and public transport connectivity, including improvements to the M56 corridor and the development of the Metrolink extension to the airport, have **strengthened links between the airport and the wider city-region.** More recently, the airport has become the anchor for a new phase of development, from the regeneration of Wythenshawe town centre to the emergence of MIX Manchester, one of Britain's largest science, innovation and advanced manufacturing districts. Together, these projects demonstrate how strategic infrastructure can create self-reinforcing cycles of investment, attracting businesses, jobs and new development well beyond the airport boundary.

As the North seeks to realise its economic potential and play a larger role in driving British growth, **the airport has a significant role to play as the principal international gateway of the North** - success in further nurturing the region's high-growth sectors will depend on this international connectivity. Yet for all the success Runway 2 has delivered over the past 25 years, much of its potential remains untapped, with only around half of Manchester's runway capacity being utilised at a time when airport capacity remains constrained elsewhere in Britain. In many ways, Manchester Airport reflects the Northern economy itself: **a globally significant asset with substantial capacity still available to support future growth with the right investment and supporting infrastructure.**

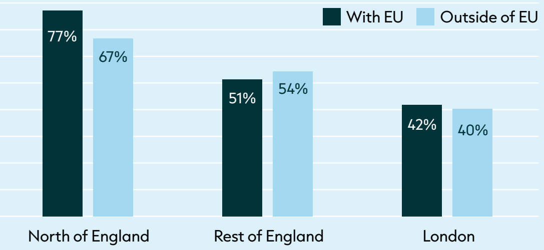
That makes this an important moment. After decades of attempts to rebalance the British economy, government is again placing growth in the North at the centre of its agenda through Northern Powerhouse Rail, the Industrial Strategy, and a renewed commitment to devolution. Twenty-five years ago, local leaders backed Runway 2 before demand fully existed. That decision helped transform Greater Manchester and the North's economy. The challenge now is to show the same ambition again. The conditions are in place for the North's next take-off. This time, the prize is not just regional prosperity, but a **stronger and more balanced British economy.**

A ROUTE TO GROWTH FOR THE NORTH 2001 - 2026

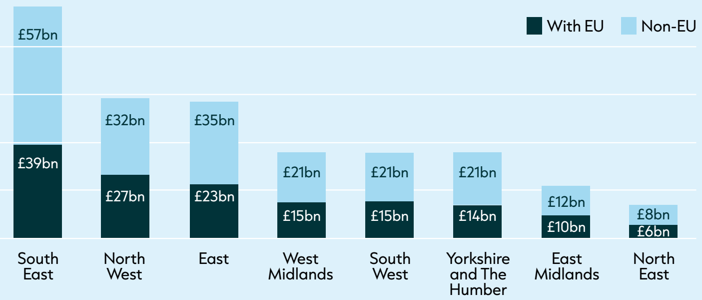
TRADE

- Goods trade in the North of England grew by 66% between 2008 and 2025, outpacing both the rest of England (53%) and London (50%)
- The EU remained the North's largest goods export market (£33.2bn) in 2025
- Export growth since 2008 has been stronger in Asia and Oceania (50%), MENA (44%) and Latin America (44%) than in the EU (26%)
- Services trade in the North West grew by 48% between 2016 and 2023, reaching £59bn and making it England's second-largest services trading region outside London
- The number of North West businesses both importing and exporting increased from 8,300 in 2011 to 13,100 in 2023

Growth in the value of goods traded between 2008 and 2025 was higher in the north of England than the rest of England and London

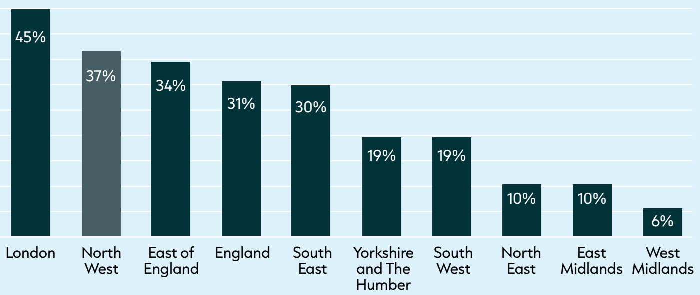


Value of services trade, 2023, split by trading partner area



Growth in number of businesses who both import and export between 2011 and 2023

Source: WPI Economics analysis of ONS



2001

Direct Routes
140

Passengers
19.3m

2006

Direct Routes
152

Passengers
22.4m

Jobs
42,510

Economic Impact
£938m

2011

Direct Routes
190

Passengers
18.8m

Jobs
40,000

Economic Impact
£1.3bn

2016

Direct Routes
210

Passengers
23.4m

Jobs
113,800

Economic Impact
£7.1bn*

2023

Direct Routes
196

Passengers
29.4m

Jobs
108,080

Economic Impact
£8.3bn*

2026

Direct Routes
214

Passengers
32.3m

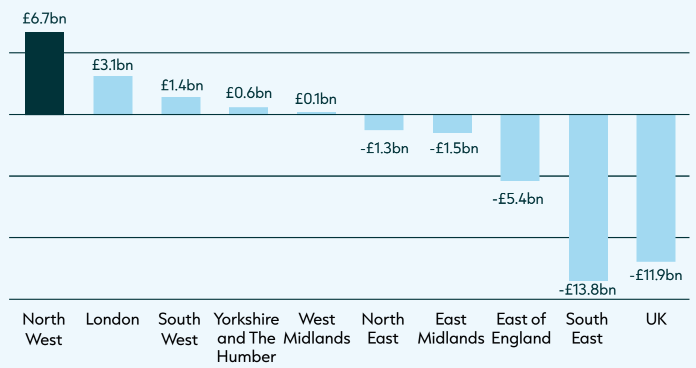
Jobs
117,530

Economic Impact
£9.5bn*

INVESTMENT

- Greater Manchester secured 659 greenfield FDI projects between 2013-2025, worth approximately £102 billion
- Greater Manchester is described as the leading destination for FDI projects outside London
- North West net inward FDI rose from -£2billion in 2015 to to £4.7 billion in 2024 while UK-wide FDI declined
- Manchester is ranked among Europe's 15 most attractive cities for investors

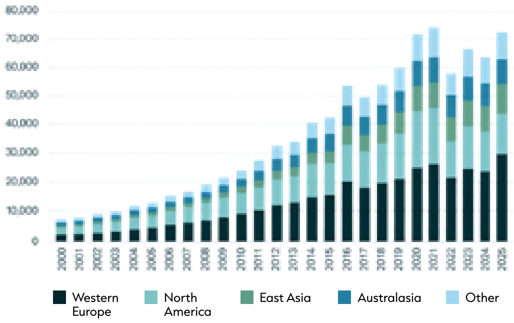
Change in net inward foreign direct investment flow (2015-2024



UNIVERSITIES

- In the 10 years to 2024/25, the North saw 56% growth in international student numbers, now home to 135,000
- International students generated £7.9bn in net economic impact across the North in 2024/25
- Global research collaborations involving N8 universities rose tenfold between 2000-2025 to 71,649

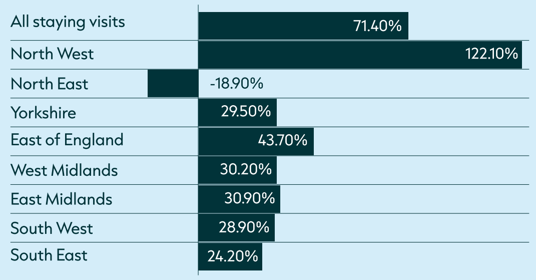
Global research collaborations involving N8 universities 2000-2205



VISITORS

- In 2024, the north of England hosted 4.9m visits from overseas residents - 13% of overall overseas UK visits
- The North West saw a 122% increase in international visitors between 2002-2024 - the most of any region outside London

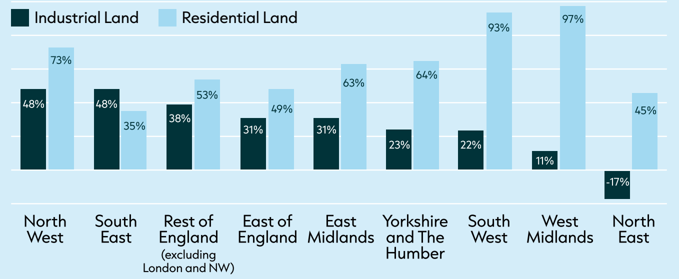
Increase in international visits to regions outside London 2002-2024



LAND USE

- Between 2017 and 2023, industrial land values in the North West increased by 48%, the joint-highest of any English region outside London
- Over the same period, residential land values in the North West increased by 73%, compared with 53% across the rest of England (excluding London)
- Manchester residential land values increased by 455% between 2017 and 2023, while Salford increased by 476%, the highest in the region
- Manchester industrial land values increased by 54% between 2017 and 2023
- The North West added 492 hectares of industrial and commercial land between 2017 and 2022, representing 19% of all net growth across England and the largest increase of any region outside the South West

Increase in the value of land per hectare (2017-2023), by land use category



* from 2016 onwards, impact includes tourism and business productivity benefits

“If you go back to the 1990s, there was a recognition in Greater Manchester that if we’re going to succeed in the modern economy, we had to be an international city and being an international city meant having good international links. It was a case of let’s get ahead of the game - let’s build the infrastructure in advance so that we are able to continue growing.”

SIR RICHARD LEESE

FORMER LEADER OF
MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

THE MANCHESTER MODEL IN ACTION

THE MANCHESTER MODEL IN ACTION

Greater Manchester has undergone an economic transformation, the scale of which is difficult to overstate. Public-private collaboration and the backing of strategic infrastructure assets - including Manchester Airport - has been central to this turnaround, one that has delivered benefits to the wider North.

MANCHESTER'S ECONOMIC TURNAROUND

In the wake of the 1973 oil crisis and rapid economic change, Greater Manchester experienced a profound economic collapse. Between 1971-1997, Manchester alone lost one in four of its jobs. Once home to more industrial headquarters than any other British city, it became one with almost none by the turn of the 21st century. Public administration and services became its largest single sector by the late 1980s.

Manchester's population fell sharply, most visibly in the city centre, which by 1990 had effectively ceased to function as a neighbourhood, with fewer than 500 residents. A similar decline was experienced in all major cities of the North.

In this context, civic leaders forged a distinctive response. The reconstruction of Manchester city centre following the 1996 IRA bomb was an **opportunity to accelerate ambition; acting as a catalyst for regeneration.** Local leaders pursued an ambitious programme of place-making aimed at reshaping the city-region's trajectory.

Central to this was infrastructure development and housing to support economic agglomeration; bringing firms, workers, and institutions closer to benefit from shared labour markets, knowledge exchange and supply chain linkages.

What developed was an interventionist model of local governance, in which civic leaders sought to deploy all available levers to **reposition Greater Manchester within a changing national and global economy.**

The result is a city-region economy that has **grown by 28% since 2015.** It has experienced **productivity growth of 42% between 2015-2023,** compared to 28% for Britain as a whole. **Manchester is now ranked by investors among Europe's 15 most attractive cities and secures the most foreign direct investment (FDI) projects after London.** A growing number of global firms have moved in, including Roku, BNY Mellon, S&P Global, Amazon, Booking.com and Puma, complementing the contingent of homegrown companies expanding out, such as The Co-operative Group, Adanola and AutoTrader.

THE EVOLUTION OF MANCHESTER AIRPORT

Of the levers civic leaders sought to pull, Manchester Airport has always been one of the most important. Time and again, they have turned to it to spearhead the city-region's economic mission and drive the internationalisation of the city. That Manchester Airport was to play this role in Greater Manchester's programme of economic renewal is no surprise, with the city having supported it to become a strategically important anchor amenity over many preceding decades.

The airport remained wholly publicly owned during the period in which Greater Manchester was responding both to industrial decline and to the liberalisation of the airport market in the 1980s. During this phase, its local authority owners acted as proactive investors in airport infrastructure, **supporting expansion and modernisation to ensure the airport stayed ahead of emerging risks and capacity constraints.**

At key moments, investment increased the capacity of the airport, its global reach, and its accessibility for people across Britain.

- **The runway was extended in 1969 to enable transatlantic flights**
- **The M56 connection opened in 1972, greatly easing access**
- **A freight terminal enabling greater global trade opened in 1986**
- **Followed in 1993 by Terminal 2 and a direct rail link, which doubled capacity and transformed throughput**

Supporting this was significant entrepreneurial public capital, such as £250 million in Public Works Loan Board finance for Terminal 2, demonstrating both access to funding and a willingness to deploy it at scale. These decisions were justified by a clear economic logic, linking passenger growth to both commercial success and regional internationalisation.

1991
Plans for Runway 2 announced

1993
Planning application submitted

1994/5
Public enquiry

1997
Consent granted

2001
Runway 2 opens

THE CASE OF RUNWAY 2

By the 1990s, Manchester Airport had established itself as the premier international gateway outside London. Its future success, however, faced a hard constraint: a single runway.

Absolute capacity had not yet been exhausted, but the more pressing issue was how growing utilisation would shape behaviour within the system. As capacity grew scarcer, airlines would face growing pressures to favour high-volume, price-sensitive leisure markets at the expense of higher-value business and long-haul services. Without additional capacity, Manchester's route network risked shrinking over time, narrowing its ability to support business connectivity, trade, and investment and with it, Manchester Airport's economic role in the North.

The response of city-region and airport leaders was decisive: **build Britain's first full-length commercial runway in more than 20 years.** The logic behind this is best captured by contemporary economist Robert Reich, who in 1991 argued that participation in the emerging global knowledge economy depended on the combination of 'brains and quick access to the rest of the world', in practice, a world-class university and an international airport. Greater Manchester already possessed the former through the forerunners to the University of Manchester. Runway 2 would retain and grow the latter.

The project moved from announcement to opening in a decade, a compressed timeframe by British infrastructure standards. That illustrates the ability of civic and airport leadership to mobilise and align stakeholders and deliver at pace. More than 25 years on, Manchester Airport has emerged as a **more balanced international hub,** supporting a wider range of economic activity across the North. The significance of this investment is heightened by the fact that it took place against a backdrop of persistent underinvestment in Britain relative to many comparable advanced economies.

CREATING THE UK'S GLOBAL GATEWAY IN THE NORTH

As Greater Manchester's economic success draws growing attention, the airport at its centre matches its scale.

Manchester is Britain's third largest airport and the biggest outside London, connecting the North to **more than 200 destinations** in more than 60 countries, serving a record **32 million passengers** in 2025.

Analysis of Manchester Airport's recent long-haul performance makes the step-change in capacity clear. Despite pandemic-era disruption, the trajectory is strongly upward, with passenger numbers continuing to grow and new routes opening. Among these are direct connections to over a third of the world's top 50 city economies, embedding the **North in the highest tier of international connectivity.** For many destinations, it is the only airport outside London offering a direct long-haul service. The growth enabled by Runway 2, combined with the investments that followed, has created the airport as it is today: among **Europe's biggest 20 airports by passenger volume** and one of the few in that group with room to grow without major new infrastructure.

As the following sections set out, the significance of the airport extends well beyond passenger numbers, routes, or the airport boundary itself. Manchester Airport and the economies of the North have grown in tandem over recent decades, each reinforcing the other through a mutually beneficial cycle of growth, investment and internationalisation. The relationship is now fundamental not only to the city-region and North's international standing, but also to their future economic success and ability to compete in an increasingly global economy.

"Manchester Airport is a fantastic example of Greater Manchester at its finest, where public sector working with private sector brings both long-term planning and infrastructure investment, but also brings opportunities to people now. And we've seen that through social value, through procurement, through how the supply chain has been used, benefiting people right here."

BEV CRAIG
GREATER MANCHESTER MAYOR

USHERING IN AN ERA OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

USHERING IN AN ERA OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

The evolution of Manchester Airport we have described has turned it into a strategic asset that serves as an anchor amenity for Greater Manchester and the North: a successful business, nurtured over decades by long-term local leadership.

The success of this model has made it an attractive proposition for outside investors, and in 2013 MAG's ten council shareholders acted on that opportunity, bringing in IFM Investors, an Australian infrastructure fund, to help fund MAG's £1.5 billion acquisition of London Stansted Airport.

The move reflected the same entrepreneurial confidence that had defined the airport's earlier development, now extended into a formal partnership with private capital.

The benefits have been both direct and lasting. A larger group, including Stansted and East Midlands Airport, has meant greater dividends flowing back to the ten councils, while the partnership model has continued to mobilise capital for MAG's follow-on investment programme. Most significantly at Manchester Airport, the Greater Manchester councils and their IFM co-owners provided the finance for the £1.5 billion Manchester Airport Transformation Programme that has redeveloped Terminal 2. A further car park scheme in 2019 saw the same partnership operate in miniature, with the co-owners working together to deliver the programme. MIX Manchester, as discussed above, follows in the same vein of public-private enterprise with its joint venture combining local authorities, local pension funds, MAG, and an international investor.

> *Manchester Airport, the Greater Manchester councils and their IFM co-owners provided the finance for the £1.5 billion Manchester Airport Transformation Programme that has redeveloped Terminal 2*

Just as importantly, bringing in IFM embedded a working culture of public and private actors collaborating toward shared goals, embodied in MAG's ownership structure itself with majority council control paired with private capital and expertise. MAG operates as a publicly minded commercial business, one of the standouts in its sector, working with local leaders to deliver good growth.

This has become a central part of the Manchester model. Public-private enterprise has underpinned many of the city's most significant regeneration successes, helping to translate long-term civic ambition into projects delivered at scale. In East Manchester, a combination of public investment and international private capital helped transform an area once associated with industrial decline into a major growth corridor centred on assets such as Sportcity and the Etihad Campus, and now Co-Op Live, creating jobs, attracting investment, and supporting wider neighbourhood renewal.

The same model continues to shape the city-region's future through Victoria North, one of the largest urban regeneration programmes in Europe. Delivered through a partnership between Manchester City Council and Far East Consortium, and bringing more than 15,000 new homes alongside major investment in parks, public spaces, and community infrastructure, and creating a series of new neighbourhoods that will support Manchester's next phase of growth.

MAG has been at the forefront of this wider shift towards public-private enterprise, both through its partnership with IFM and through ventures such as MIX Manchester, demonstrating how long-term civic leadership and private investment can work together to deliver transformational change.

CASE STUDY

BW3

Formed in 2002, just one year after Manchester Airport's second runway opened, BW3 (Business Working with Wythenshawe) **demonstrates how the airport's model of public-private partnership has evolved beyond infrastructure investment into long-term social value.** Established following a Manchester Airport-led "Seeing is Believing" visit, BW3 has grown into an alliance of more than 130 businesses working together to support the economic and social regeneration of Wythenshawe.

BW3 brings together businesses, schools, community organisations and public sector partners to create opportunities for local residents, particularly young people. Its programmes include mentoring schemes that support students into employment, training and university; the Reading Mentoring programme, now in its fifth year; the Peer Power Hub, which helps pupils transition from primary to secondary school; careers and STEM activities; apprenticeship fairs; and the Wythenshawe Business Gateway networking programme, which strengthens links between employers and the local community.

More than two decades on, BW3 remains a powerful example of how Manchester Airport's partnership-based ownership model has fostered an enduring culture of collaboration, shared responsibility and community investment.

CASE STUDY

MIX MANCHESTER

MIX Manchester is a 60-acre science, innovation and advanced manufacturing campus located next to Manchester Airport. Planned to deliver around 2 million sq ft of manufacturing, R&D, laboratory and office space, it is designed to support high-growth sectors including life sciences, advanced materials, digital technology and clean technology. The development brings together businesses, researchers, investors and skilled talent within a globally connected innovation district.

The project is being delivered through a partnership between Manchester Airports Group (MAG), Manchester City Council, the Greater Manchester Pension Fund and Beijing Construction Engineering Group (BCEG), **combining public-sector leadership, long-term institutional investment and private-sector expertise.**

Supported by more than £30 million of infrastructure investment and expected to unlock around £1 billion of development value, MIX Manchester is projected to create up to 8,000 jobs and strengthen Greater Manchester's position in globally competitive industries.

Its location next to the UK's global gateway in the North provides direct access to international markets, talent and research networks, helping to attract investment and accelerate innovation.

MIX Manchester demonstrates how public and private partners can work together to deliver long-term economic growth, creating a strategic asset that supports jobs, productivity, inward investment and regional competitiveness for decades to come.

"Manchester Airport first helped me remain connected with my family, and today it helps me take a technology developed in the North West to international customers and partners."

EMANUELE ZANCHETTIN

FOUNDER AND CEO,
THINKITTECH,
DARESBURY, CHESHIRE

THE UK'S GLOBAL GATEWAY IN THE NORTH

THE UK'S GLOBAL GATEWAY IN THE NORTH

As Manchester Airport has grown and evolved into the global gateway it is today, its economic impacts have increasingly reached all parts of the North.

Research has shown that stronger international connectivity consistently boosts economic growth by better linking people and businesses around the world and the North's experience bears this out across four principal channels.

- DRIVING INTERNATIONAL TRADE
- ATTRACTING INWARD INVESTMENT
- ENABLING THE FLOW OF VISITORS AND IDEAS
- SHAPING PLACEMAKING

Underpinning the first two is the international transmission of 'know-how' and 'know-who', referring to the tacit expertise and the business networks that are best transmitted face-to-face rather than digitally, making connectivity indispensable for knowledge-sharing and creating partnerships. This matters most in high-value, internationally oriented sectors where access to global markets, talent and partners is critical to competitiveness. The latter two channels rest on a complementary logic with direct connectivity raising a place's accessibility and international profile, making it easier for visitors, students, and investors alike to discover, reach, and choose the city-regions of the North over competitor destinations.

DRIVING INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Goods trade in the North of England
Grew by 66% between 2008 & 2025
outpacing both the rest of England (53%) and London (50%)

The EU remained the North's largest goods export market
£33.2bn in 2025

Export growth since 2008 has been stronger in: Asia and Oceania (50%) MENA (44%) and Latin America (44%) than in the EU (26%)

Services trade in the North West
Grew by 48% between 2016 & 2023
reaching **£59bn** and making it England's second-largest services trading region outside London

The number of North West businesses both importing and exporting
increased from 8,300 in 2011 to 13,100 in 2023

Manchester Airport has helped businesses across Greater Manchester and the wider North reach customers, suppliers and partners around the world, supporting the region's shift towards higher-value economic activity and a more export-oriented economy.

This matters because exporting firms tend to be more productive, innovative and resilient, while places with stronger export bases typically enjoy higher wages and living standards.

The growth of the North's trade over recent decades reflects increasing internationalisation. Between 2008 and 2025, the value of goods trade grew by 66%, outpacing both the rest of England and London.

While Europe remains the North's largest export market, growth has been particularly strong in Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, underlining the importance of direct international connectivity to fast-growing global markets. Services trade has followed a similar trajectory, growing by 48% in the North West between 2016 and 2023 to reach £59 billion, making it the largest services trading region outside London.

These trends are particularly significant because many of the sectors driving growth across the North are also those most dependent on international connectivity. Advanced manufacturing, life sciences, financial and professional services, and digital industries rely on access to global customers, talent, knowledge and investment.

Manchester Airport's expanding route network has therefore supported sectors that sit at the heart of both the Industrial Strategy and Northern Growth Strategy, helping to underpin the North's productivity and economic performance.

QIAGEN exemplifies this. Originating as an AstraZeneca spin-out and now part of a global biotechnology group, QIAGEN's Manchester site is closely integrated with research, commercial and operational teams across its international network. Connectivity through Manchester Airport supports regular engagement with colleagues, customers and partners around the world while also helping the company expand into new export markets. In China, for example, growth has been supported by specialist staff travelling to hospitals and clinical partners to deliver training in advanced diagnostic technologies, activity that depends on regular face-to-face engagement and reliable international connections. Therefore for firms operating in knowledge-intensive sectors, connectivity is not just a facilitator of trade, but an integral part of how export relationships are won, maintained and grown.

These patterns extend to internationally oriented clusters across the wider North West, including Cheshire and Warrington's life sciences activity, centred on assets such as Alderley Park and organised around globally connected research and commercial networks. Evidence indicates that businesses across the North West trading both imports and exports experienced the fastest growth of any English region outside London between 2011 and 2023, with improved connectivity lowering the barriers to international engagement and enabling a broader base of firms to access overseas markets.

> *"For QIAGEN, international connectivity is business-critical given the relevance of our Manchester site. Our teams work closely with colleagues, customers and partners across Europe, the U.S. and beyond. The airport helps keep these relationships moving and supports collaboration, customer engagement and the flow of innovation across our global network for life sciences research and clinical diagnostics."*
>
> **JULIA BUCKLER**
> HEAD OF ASSAY DEVELOPMENT & MANCHESTER SITE HEAD AT QIAGEN

BORN IN THE NORTH, SOLD TO THE WORLD

DUO, MANCHESTER, GREATER MANCHESTER

A manufacturer of packaging used by some of the world's largest retailers and consumer brands. If you've ordered something online, there's a good chance it arrived in Duo packaging.

Over 40 years, Duo has worked with customers to improve how packaging performs throughout the supply chain, while reducing waste and environmental impact. A boom in click-and-collect and locker deliveries has driven demand for its patented DuoOptipac mailing bag. Exports now account for 15% of sales, with countries sold to in the last year including India, Italy, Belgium, Bangladesh, Cambodia and the USA. It has warehousing facilities in Atlanta, Berlin and North China.

INFORMED SOLUTIONS, ALTRINCHAM, GREATER MANCHESTER

Founded in 1992, it is a mid-sized firm that has grown into an international digital, data, and AI business.

Operating across the UK, Australia, ASEAN, and Europe, Informed develops digital products and services that help make the world smarter, safer, cleaner, and healthier. Key sectors include healthcare, public safety, transport, energy, the environment and critical national infrastructure. It helps clients improve the use of data and to apply AI responsibly.

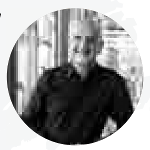
SPICE KITCHEN, LIVERPOOL, LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

An award-winning, family business founded by mother-and-son team Shashi and Sanjay Aggarwal. It began around the family kitchen table on Christmas Day 2012 and has grown into an internationally-recognised food and gifting brand, producing small-batch spice blends, signature spice tins, cookery kits and gifts inspired by flavours from around the world. The company's first export market was Ireland, followed by European markets including Belgium. It has since developed relationships with retailers in Dubai and the wider Middle East, more recently expanding into the United States.

SEDA PHARMA DEVELOPMENT SERVICES, CHEADLE, GREATER MANCHESTER

A contract research, development and manufacturing organisation that helps pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies accelerate the development of new medicines from preclinical stages through to clinical manufacture. Founded in 2015, Seda serves clients across North America, Europe and Asia-Pacific, with more than half of its revenues coming from exports. The company has invested significantly in facilities, technology and talent, creating highly skilled jobs in Greater Manchester while supporting drug development programmes for clients around the world.

EXPO STARS, MANCHESTER, GREATER MANCHESTER



Founded in in 2007 by Lee Ali, Expo Stars Interactive helps businesses attending global exhibitions get better returns from their investment.

Services include sales training, providing multilingual staff to front exhibition stands and anything else that creates better business connections at events. It has grown into an internationally-recognised consultancy, having supported more than 4,000 events in 53 countries in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and North America.

KI PARTNERSHIPS, LIVERPOOL, LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

Founded in 2021, it provides property and growth advisory services to businesses, investors, public bodies and government departments globally.

Drawing upon the nearly 30 years of experience of founder Paul Kallee-Grover MBE, Ki helps clients identify trusted partners, enter new markets, attract investment and build lasting commercial relationships. Recent projects include in Oman, Qatar, the UAE, Germany and China, where Paul spoke at the 2026 Beijing CBD Cross-Border Investment Forum.

VIRSEC, MANCHESTER, GREATER MANCHESTER

Established in 2016, VIRSEC specialises in providing online maritime and port security training to shipping companies, port facilities or maritime professionals.

From its Manchester city centre base, it provides training in 135 countries, with its largest customers in the USA, The Netherlands, France, Norway and Greece. The firm was part of the Prime Minister's trade mission to India in 2025.

SPACE ZERO / KAMPUS INTERNATIONAL, MANCHESTER, GREATER MANCHESTER

Specialists in the design of learning environments, having delivered more than 1,000 education projects worldwide over the past 17 years. It works across the UK, Europe, UAE, China, Thailand and Malaysia, designing and delivering innovative experiential educational spaces that improve learning and wellbeing. More recently, projects for Space Zero and sister business architectural practice Kampus International have been secured in KSA, USA, Mexico, and Egypt, with expansion to Ethiopia and India planned.

THE INTERNATIONAL GROUP, NORTH ANSTON, SHEFFIELD CITY REGION

A specialist engineering and manufacturing firm, supplying high-quality steel, alloys and precision-engineered components to customers in industries like energy, defence, aerospace, aviation and marine. Customers include major international businesses like Aker Solutions and OneSubsea, with products used in settings from subsea infrastructure and power generation to aircraft systems and defence equipment.

It was founded in 2017 as a one-person operation by Emma Parkinson and has evolved into a global player with 70% of business overseas. The Group trades across Europe, the Middle East, Asia Pacific and the United States.

OXLEY GROUP, ULVESTON, CUMBRIA

A world-leading designer and manufacturer of advanced aerospace and defence technologies, exporting to customers in 34 countries across all five continents from its Cumbria base. Exports account for more than 80% of turnover and the business has built long standing relationships with global organisations including Airbus, Saab, Lockheed Martin, KAI, General Dynamics and BAE Systems.

Oxley continues to invest in advanced manufacturing, innovation and skills in Cumbria. For businesses like Oxley, strong international connectivity is essential.

PAXMAN, HUDDERSFIELD, WEST YORKSHIRE

For more than 25 years, Paxman has been dedicated to improving quality of life for people undergoing chemotherapy by developing solutions to manage distressing side effects. It is best-known for The Paxman Scalp Cooling System, which helps prevent chemotherapy-induced alopecia and is now used in cancer centres and hospitals across Europe, The Americas, Asia and Oceania. Its sustained investment in R&D has created a product pipeline to address other side-effects. Paxman also localises its products through language translation and training platforms. It now trades in 65 countries, from Croatia to Canada, Poland to Pakistan and Switzerland to Singapore.

HYDRAULICS ONLINE, ALSAGER, CHESHIRE

A kitchen table start-up founded by husband-and-wife team Mark and Helen Tonks in 2004. They used their engineering and strategic business career experience to build a truly customer-centric company that has exported to more than 130 countries. Clients range from an observatory in Chile and mining engineers in South Africa to energy suppliers in the UAE, marine engineers in Western Australia, and everything in-between.

PLAYDALE PLAYGROUNDS, ULVESTON, CUMBRIA

Founded in 1978, Playdale is a leading UK designer, maker and installer of outdoor play equipment, having delivered more than 27,000 playgrounds and expanded to more than 50 countries worldwide. Serving sectors including education, local government, housing and leisure, Playdale exports across Europe, North America, Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Oceania through a global distribution network.

JOHN KING CHAINS, SHERBURN-IN-ELMET, NORTH YORKSHIRE

The family-owned manufacturer has just celebrated its centenary. It makes heavy duty conveyor and elevator chains, sprockets, shafts, laser profiled and other parts supplied to the materials handling industry worldwide.

Founded during the coal industry boom, the firm pivoted as the sector declined and diversified into new global markets and industries. It now supports sectors including mining, quarrying, cement, biomass, sugar, ports, recycling, agriculture, food processing and transport in 70 countries worldwide. Parts can be found in escalators, moving walkways and theme park rides. Exports now account for nearly 50% of turnover.

THE SCOTT PARTNERSHIP, HOLMES CHAPEL, CHESHIRE

The life sciences marketing specialist has exported its services since being founded. It helps organisations - from Fortune 500 market leaders to SMEs and start-ups - looking to build profile. Clients have typically been in US biotech hubs like Boston and Silicon Valley, as well as across Europe, especially Germany. Further European expansion - to Italy, Switzerland and France has followed, with access to Manchester Airport key to productive and efficient business trips.

DUCO DIGITAL TRAINING, REDCAR, NORTH EAST

A provider of professional certifications and training in AI and Responsible AI, Business Analysis, Data Protection, IT Architecture, Information Security and Digital Transformation to individual learners and organisations across the UK and internationally.

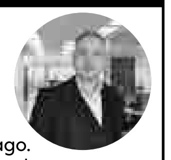
Export markets have become key to growth: Duco works with clients and partners in markets including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Indonesia, Switzerland and Spain, supporting government bodies, universities and organisations looking to build AI and digital skills capability.

SOUND LEISURE, LEEDS, WEST YORKSHIRE

A third generation family business that has been designing and manufacturing Jukeboxes since 1978. First set up to supply the UK hospitality industry, exports now make up 70% of sales, with all products made in its Leeds factory.

It bases designs on those made famous in the 1940s and 50s, focussing on analogue formats like vinyl LPs, 45s and CDs. Sound supplies individuals and the luxury leisure scene globally.

THINKITTECH, DARESBURY, CHESHIRE



Industrial software and engineering specialist Emanuele Zanchettin founded ThinkITtech at Sci-Tech Daresbury after he moved to the UK a decade ago. The firm is developing AMSynchro, a system that monitors and traces critical materials while they're being stored, handled and transported. It serves the space, aerospace and defence sectors, with its AI-technology winning support from the European Space Agency and UK Space Agency. The firm has clients across Europe and North America.

> *"You can say to investors from Asia or North America: establish your business here and run your European operations from Manchester. You don't need to be in London - you're already connected to Paris, Frankfurt, Milan, and beyond."*

JOE MANNING
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
INVEST MANCHESTER

GROWING THE NORTH'S GLOBAL APPEAL

ATTRACTING INWARD INVESTMENT

Greater Manchester secured **659 greenfield FDI projects** between 2013-2025, worth approximately £10.2bn

Greater Manchester is described as the **leading destination** for FDI projects outside London

Net FDI into the North West increased by **£6.7bn** over the past decade, reaching **£8.7bn** by UK-wide levels declined

Manchester is ranked among Europe's **15 most attractive cities** for investors.

The North West's net inward FDI rise from -£2 billion in 2015 to **£4.7 billion** in 2024, while UK-wide FDI declined

Greater Manchester's success in attracting and sustaining international investment has been underpinned by an explicitly proactive, coordinated approach.

Over an extended period, the city-region's public-private partnership between Invest Manchester (formerly MIDAS), MAG, and wider civic leadership has aligned international connectivity with target markets for trade and investment, combining commercial aviation logic with a clear articulation of economic opportunity.

This is most evident in long-haul routes to strategically important markets, including North America, India, China and the Middle East, pursued through coordinated engagement with airlines, firms, and international partners. Platforms such as the Manchester China Forum and the Manchester India Partnership brought government, business and academia together, building the relationships and institutional coordination needed to make the case for and maximise routes into strategic markets.

This alignment has translated into tangible outcomes. Greater Manchester ranked as the top destination for foreign direct investment projects outside London in 2025, reflecting years of sustained success in attracting international capital. Internationally, it was the only British city outside London ranked among Europe's top 15 for investment, alongside capitals such as Rome and Budapest. The scale and quality of this investment stand out nationally, with Manchester securing 659 greenfield projects between 2013 and 2025, worth £10.2 billion, 1.7 times the value attracted by Birmingham and 2.6 times that of Leeds.[3] This is also reflected in the growing presence and expansion of major global companies in the city-region, including IBM, Booking.com, Klarna, Bosch, Roku, Puma, and BNY Mellon.
The benefits, however, have not been confined to Greater Manchester. The North West has seen net inward investment more than double over the past decade, rising from £2 billion in 2015 to £8.7 billion in 2024, even as inward investment has weakened nationally. Chinese automotive manufacturer Chery recently chose Liverpool for its European headquarters to pioneer the next generation of commercial vehicles enhanced with electric, hydrogen and autonomous systems. In South Yorkshire, Boeing's investment at the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District and wider advanced manufacturing cluster has helped attract a concentration of globally significant firms including McLaren and Rolls-Royce.

> *"Greater Manchester ranked as the top destination for foreign direct investment projects outside of London in 2025"*

Together, these examples reflect a wider trend: as Northern city-regions have become more integrated into global markets, international connectivity has become an increasingly important factor in attracting and retaining investment. Manchester Airport has played a critical role in supporting that internationalisation as the North's principal global gateway.

Over time, this pattern of inward investment has reinforced sectoral clustering, with firms co-locating in areas of existing strength and contributing to deeper, more specialised industry ecosystems. In turn, the presence of these anchor investors has attracted further firms, talent and capital into the same sectors, creating a cumulative effect in which connectivity, investment, and cluster development increasingly accelerate one another.

ENABLING THE FLOW OF PEOPLE AND IDEAS

Greater connectivity supports international research collaboration, which has risen sharply since 2016 . Manchester's ties with leading Chinese institutions, for instance, have grown significantly since direct routes began in 2015, particularly in STEM fields aligned with Greater Manchester's innovation priorities.

The University of Manchester has also significantly strengthened its global research footprint through formal partnerships including the Manchester-Melbourne-Toronto Alliance, Manchester-Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the Manchester-IISC Bangalore partnership, which have driven significant growth in joint research outputs.

Other key partnerships include:

- The Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine has global health partnerships across Africa, Asia and Latin America, while Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University has created a major platform for research collaboration between Britain and China
- The University of Sheffield's Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) works with universities, researchers and industry partners from around the world
- Lancaster University's Environment Centre collaborates with international organisations including the Chinese Academy of Sciences
- The pan-Northern Cockcroft Institute maintains close links with CERN, the European Council for Nuclear Research.

International students generated **£7.9bn in net economic impact** across the North in 2024/25

Global research collaborations involving N8 universities rose tenfold between 2000-2025 to **71,649**

In 2024, the north of England hosted **4.9m visits from overseas residents** - 13% of overall overseas UK visits

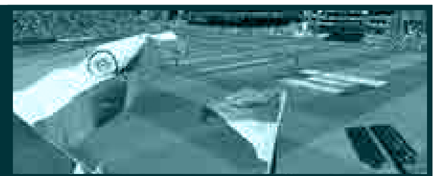
This work demonstrates the link between connectivity and the flow of ideas and innovation, strengthening sectors that are central to the region's long-term growth.

The North has more than 135,000 international university students, with the 2024/25 cohort generating £7.9 billion in net economic impact across the region according to research by HEPI. Beyond their studies, many go on to work in the region, feeding directly into the innovation and skills base. The North West also welcomed 3.4 million extra tourists in 2024, making it the most visited English region outside London and the South East. The North's appeal is reflected in a concentration of world-class destinations: six World Heritage Sites; five National Parks and seven National Landscapes. Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Sheffield rank among England's most visited cities, while major events such as Eurovision 2023 in Liverpool, the BRIT Awards in Manchester continue to attract global visitors.

Manchester alone was Britain's third most visited city outside London, while the international profile of its football clubs continues to draw visitors. Football contributes around £1.1 billion to the city-region economy each year, supporting more than 21,000 jobs. There are eight Premier League teams within two hours of Manchester Airport. The total contribution of inbound tourism through Manchester Airport is £1.2 billion in GVA, with more than 25,000 jobs supported in 2023.

CASE STUDY

LCCC LANCASHIRE COUNTY CRICKET CLUB



For more than 160 years,
Lancashire Cricket has evolved from one of England's most successful domestic clubs into a globally-recognised sports and entertainment business. Today, it generates £35 million in annual revenue through elite cricket, conferences and events, hospitality, commercial partnerships and its on-site 250-bedroom Hilton Garden Inn.

At the heart of the Club is Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground – the second oldest Test venue in England and is best known for hosting Men's and Women's internationals, Lancashire's domestic programme and The Hundred. Between 2025-2027, it will stage international fixtures featuring India, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Australia, New Zealand and Pakistan.

Lancashire's global profile has been strengthened by its partnership with the Kolkata-based RPSG Group, which bought a majority stake in Manchester Super Giants. The Club's international reputation has also been shaped by attracting some of cricket's biggest names, including Farokh Engineer, Sir Clive Lloyd, Harmanpreet Kaur, Meg Lanning, Wasim Akram and Muttiah Muralitharan. Through LancsTV, supporters worldwide can watch live and on-demand action, while the Club's digital platforms engage millions each year.

Lancashire's long-standing partnership with Emirates reflects the Club's global ambitions and has mirrored the growth of Manchester Airport, where the number of Emirates flights has increased by more than 50% since the partnership began in 2012, with more than one million Emirates passengers now travelling through Manchester each year.

"The fundamentals of Greater Manchester are the core assets the city region has at its disposal – its population size, universities at real scale, and an international airport – combined with a clear strategy for how those strengths are brought together."

TIM NEWNS

DIRECTOR AT THE OFFICE FOR INVESTMENT

SHAPING PLACES

SHAPING PLACES

International connectivity plays an important role in supporting the high-value sectors that now drive growth across Greater Manchester and the wider North.

As highlighted in *Services Superpower,* innovative sectors depend significantly on access to international markets, talent, investors and collaborators. Together with other competitive advantages, including strong university talent pipelines, a comparatively affordable cost base and proactive civic leadership, this has helped create the conditions for the development of specialised business clusters across the region. These clusters take different forms. In some cases, growth has coalesced around major anchor organisations that attract suppliers, partners, talent and investment. In others, dedicated innovation districts and specialist commercial environments have been developed to bring together firms operating in related sectors, with examples including Circle Square in Manchester, Media City in Salford, Liverpool's Knowledge Quarter, and Sheffield's Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District.

Manchester Airport has increasingly supported this process by strengthening the international connectivity on which many of these clusters depend. Developments such as MIX Manchester, Britain's only innovation district directly connected to an international airport, are the clearest expression of this relationship, combining global connectivity with research, manufacturing and commercial space designed for internationally oriented firms. As the North has become more globally connected, the number and scale of these internationally focused business locations have grown alongside it.

The effects are visible in wider development trends. Between 2017 and 2022, the North West recorded one of the largest increases in industrial and commercial land of any English region, while industrial land values rose by 48% between 2017 and 2023.

This growth reflects increasing demand for the office, laboratory, manufacturing and innovation space required by internationally oriented businesses, highlighting the links between connectivity, investment and placemaking across the North.

"Increased connectivity drives demand from business locating and expanding in Manchester. The city is well set up to accommodate that growth - firms can quickly establish a presence, with access to flexible workspace, dedicated innovation environments, and a clear pathway to scale"

KATIE GALLAGHER

MANAGING DIRECTOR AT MANCHESTER DIGITAL

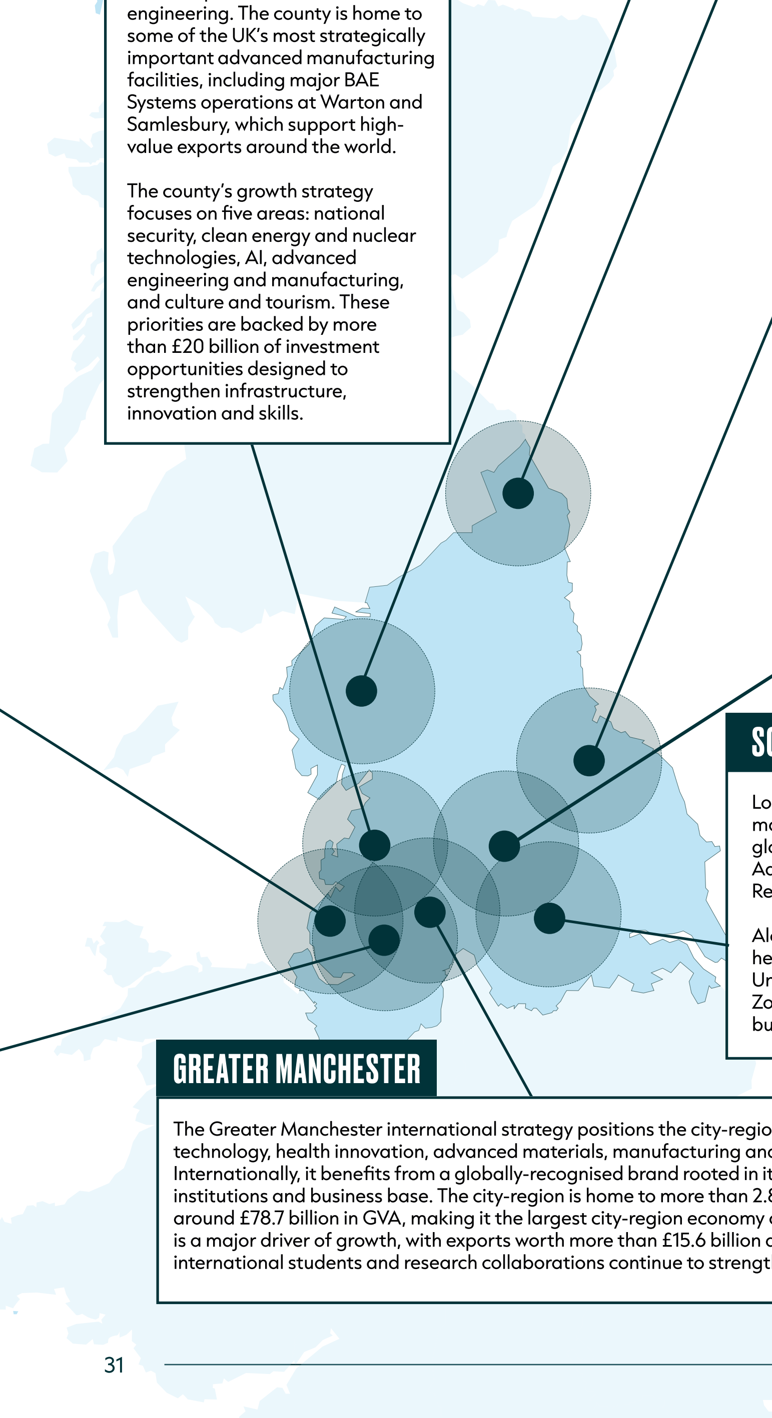
Between 2017 and 2023, industrial land values in the North West **increased by 48%,** the joint-highest of any English region outside London

Over the same period, residential land values in the North West **increased by 73%,** compared with 53% across the rest of England (excluding London)

Manchester residential land values **increased by 455% between 2017 and 2023,** while Salford increased by **476%,** the highest in the region

Manchester industrial land values **increased by 54% between 2017 and 2023**

The North West added 492 hectares of industrial and commercial land between 2017 and 2022, representing **19% of all net growth across England** and the largest increase of any region outside the South West



CUMBRIA

Cumbria occupies a unique position within the UK economy, combining nationally strategic industrial capabilities with some of the country's most celebrated landscapes. It plays a critical role in energy security, defence and advanced manufacturing, with major activity focused around the county's nuclear and defence clusters. Current investment programmes are supporting developments in nuclear technologies, robotics, artificial intelligence and advanced engineering, giving Cumbria an importance that extends far beyond its population size.

The county is increasingly positioning itself around sectors linked to energy transition, clean growth and industrial innovation. Significant public and private investment is being directed towards strengthening supply chains, supporting technology adoption and expanding opportunities connected to energy generation, decommissioning and defence manufacturing.At the same time, Cumbria is home to one of Britain's most valuable visitor economies. The Lake District UNESCO World Heritage Site, combined with destinations such as Windermere, Coniston and Ullswater, attracts millions of visitors each year and supports over 43,000 jobs.

NORTH EAST

The North East's contemporary identity is closely linked to its leadership in the energy transition and the industries supporting a low-carbon future. The region is leveraging expertise in offshore wind, electrification, battery technologies and clean energy infrastructure to position itself at the forefront of the UK's green industrial transformation. This is reinforced by major programmes around green energy, advanced manufacturing and AI.

The region has internationally significant industrial and technology capabilities, hosting the UK's largest automotive manufacturing cluster centred on Nissan and a growing technology ecosystem including Sage and Atom Bank. Strong university and innovation assets further reinforce the region's strengths in commercialising research and attracting new investment.

LANCASHIRE

Lancashire's economy is shaped by a long-standing reputation for aerospace, defence and engineering. The county is home to some of the UK's most strategically important advanced manufacturing facilities, including major BAE Systems operations at Warton and Samlesbury, which support high-value exports around the world.

The county's growth strategy focuses on five areas: national security, clean energy and nuclear technologies, AI, advanced engineering and manufacturing, and culture and tourism. These priorities are backed by more than £20 billion of investment opportunities designed to strengthen infrastructure, innovation and skills.

YORK AND NORTH YORKSHIRE

York and North Yorkshire presents a distinctive blend of historic urban centres, globally important rural industries and innovation-led growth. Covering the historic city of York, two national parks and a substantial stretch of coastline, the region has adopted the concept of a "City Region Rural Powerhouse", reflecting the way its economy combines advanced research, agriculture, tourism and clean growth.

The area's strongest economic specialisms include engineering biology, life sciences, rail innovation, food and farming technology, clean energy and creative industries. These sectors are supported by a highly skilled workforce, strong links with research institutions and an expanding programme of trade and investment activity designed to bring new business opportunities into the region.

Tourism is one of the defining features of the regional economy. York remains one of the UK's leading heritage destinations, centred on York Minster, its medieval streets and Roman history. Beyond the city, visitors are attracted by the Yorkshire Dales, North York Moors, Harrogate's spa-town heritage and the region's coastline.

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

Home to a £43 billion economy, the city-region combines maritime heritage with cutting-edge innovation in life sciences, digital technologies, advanced manufacturing and clean energy. It has developed internationally significant expertise in infection prevention and control, materials chemistry and artificial intelligence, supported by assets such as Knowledge Quarter Liverpool, Sci-Tech Daresbury and the Hartree Centre.

The city-region has a strong concentration of globally active firms, including Jaguar Land Rover, Unilever and AstraZeneca. They benefit from one of the UK's most significant logistics and manufacturing ecosystems, helping connect UK producers with markets across Europe, North America and beyond.

WEST YORKSHIRE

West Yorkshire's economy is built around the convergence of finance, technology, manufacturing and creative industries. With Leeds at its core, the region hosts the Northern Square Mile, the UK's second-largest concentration of banking, legal and professional services outside London. It has also developed as a hub for digital technology, health innovation and AI.

West Yorkshire still has the largest manufacturing workforce in the UK and a substantial health technology sector worth billions of pounds annually. Global businesses including Amazon, Lloyds Banking Group, Channel 4, ASDA and Jet2 contribute to a diverse economy.

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Long associated with the development of specialist steels and advanced manufacturing, South Yorkshire has transformed that heritage into a global reputation for research-led innovation, particularly through the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District, the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) and the Advanced Manufacturing Park.

Alongside engineering strengths, South Yorkshire has established capabilities in health technologies, wellbeing research and digital innovation, supported by the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University. The region's Investment Zone and ambition to create a Global Innovation Corridor are intended to attract businesses working in sectors that shape the future of industry and healthcare.

CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON

Cheshire and Warrington combines globally-significant science and technology assets with one of the strongest concentrations of advanced manufacturing in the North of England. Its economy spans life sciences, industrial decarbonisation, clean energy, automotive manufacturing, digital infrastructure and agri-food innovation. The region's identity is shaped by major research and commercial assets such as Alderley Park, one of the UK's leading life sciences campuses, alongside internationally recognised employers including Bentley Motors, Barclays and Vauxhall.

The area plays a major role in the UK's transition to a lower-carbon economy, with strengths in clean energy, sustainable industry and industrial decarbonisation. This has created an environment that attracts investment into research, technology development and advanced production.

GREATER MANCHESTER

The Greater Manchester international strategy positions the city-region as a global hub for digital technology, health innovation, advanced materials, manufacturing and low-carbon technologies. Internationally, it benefits from a globally-recognised brand rooted in its universities, cultural assets, sporting institutions and business base. The city-region is home to more than 2.8 million people and generates around £78.7 billion in GVA, making it the largest city-region economy outside London. International trade is a major driver of growth, with exports worth more than £15.6 billion annually, while global investment, international students and research collaborations continue to strengthen its position on the world stage.

THE LONG TERM DIVIDEND OF INVESTMENT

THE LONG TERM DIVIDEND OF INVESTMENT

Manchester Airport's growth has always been interdependent with the growth of Greater Manchester. Runway 2 sits at the centre of that cycle, bringing significant long-term benefit, driven by the foresight and model of the city's leaders working in partnership with the private sector:

1 CAPACITY UNLOCKED

Runway 2 unlocked extra capacity for the airport, increasing the overall frequency of flights, the breadth of the network and allowing Manchester Airport to attract and retain high-value international connections.

The airport handled 19.3m passengers in the year Runway 2 opened. Volumes climbed in the years following that, reaching 22.4m by 2006. The airport served 140 destinations.. After the Global Financial Crisis, travel worldwide was impacted and annual passenger numbers fell to 17.8m by 2010.

The capacity Runway 2 gave Manchester, coupled with the strength of its catchment area, saw it build back strongly in the years following that. With the pandemic years being an obvious exception Manchester has continued to increase volumes, reaching a record 32.3m last year. Today, it serves more than 200 destinations, of which 68 are long haul. Importantly, Manchester has more than doubled the number of long-haul passengers it handles, from 3.1m in 2000 to 6.5m last year. Long haul seats account for 21% of the airport's total, compared with an average of 12% for other non-London airports.

2 GROWTH COMPOUNDED

Supported by this investment - and the connectivity it has unlocked, Manchester Airport has continued to grow and extend its impact. In 2006, it supported more than 19,000 direct and indirect jobs and a total of 42,500 in the economy as a whole, through related industries like tourism. It generated around £938m of GVA.

Since then, this has grown substantially. It now supports more than 100,000 jobs in the economy as a whole. In terms of economic contribution, the airport generated £5.1bn of GVA in the North by 2016, according to York Aviation.

At that point, it was clear Manchester was serving as a significant economic enabler, of both trade, tourism and business productivity. It therefore started measuring both its operational impact, as it had been doing since 2006 and its total impact, incorporating these additional benefits. Last year, its operational impact on the North had increased to £6.2bn, while its total economic impact grew to £9.5bn.

3 THE NEXT CYCLE OF INVESTMENT

Runway 2 created the platform for the next generation of investment. The £368 million Metrolink Airport Line opened in 2014, deepening the airport's integration into the city-region. The £1.5 billion Manchester Airport Transformation Programme was launched the next year, remodelling and doubling the capacity of Terminal 2, with completion due later in 2026. Each investment in the future has provided the foundation for deeper, broader international connectivity, increasing capacity and accessibility to the benefit of travellers and the wider economy alike.

CASE STUDY

MANCHESTER AIRPORT TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

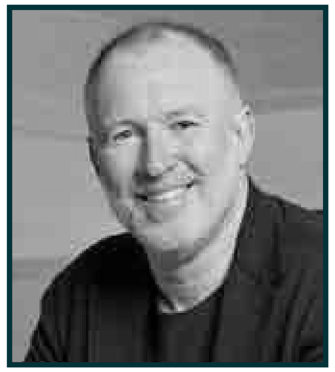
Runway 2 gave Manchester Airport the capacity to grow to up to 60m passengers per year. By the mid-2010s it became clear the growth the airport was experiencing would require it to have more terminal capacity as well.

That is what led to the Manchester Airport Transformation Programme (MAN-TP) being born. Airport management did not just want to create more space but to develop facilities that elevated passengers' experiences and befitted a top 20 European airport.

MAN-TP involved doubling the size of Terminal 2 in phases; firstly, through a new extension, which opened in 2021, then by updating the existing building and expanding its footprint. The £1.5bn programme received planning consent in 2016 and was completed mid-2026. It has seen more than 50 new shops and food and beverage outlets opened, many of which are operated by Northern businesses that have been given their opportunity to expand beyond the high street into the travel sector. New security scanners and state-of-the-art check in desks are among the technological advancements included in the build.

More than 2,000 construction jobs were created, including 330 apprentices. A new AeroZone education facility was built as part of the programme. Terminal 2 now handles more than 75% of all airport passengers and will enable the airport to handle up to 45m passengers a year. It is the prime example of how Runway 2 has triggered further private investment from MAG.

"The prize is connecting the airport into all major northern cities – if you do that properly, you strengthen Manchester Airport as the shared international gateway for the North. Liverpool, Leeds and others need to see Manchester Airport as their airport, because that connectivity is fundamental to their economic success"



CHRIS OGLESBY
CEO AT BRUNTWOOD

POWERING THE NORTH, GROWING THE UK

Transformational Growth Scenario

POWERING THE NORTH, GROWING THE UK

As in the past, the future of Manchester Airport is best understood both as transport infrastructure and a foundational economic asset.

As the gateway to the North, the airport reflects and enables the North's position in the global economy, with its connectivity ultimately a function of the depth, composition, and international orientation of the regional economy. Manchester Airport will therefore play a critical role in unlocking the full potential of the Government's Northern Growth Strategy.

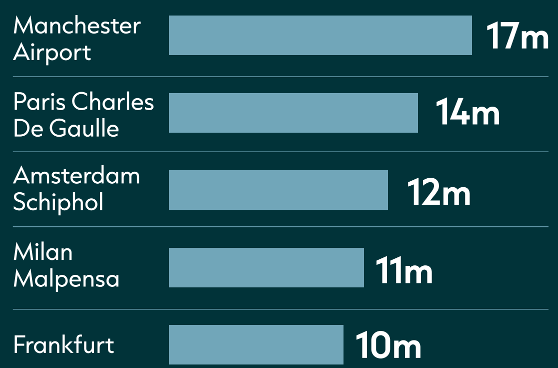
However, this potential is not being fully realised. Runway 2 is only operating at just over 50% capacity usage and with the completion of Terminal 2's expansion, the airport has significant room to grow. Analysis undertaken by Arup suggests that, under a transformational growth scenario created by Northern Powerhouse Rail and an airport station, passenger numbers could nearly double to more than 60 million annually, with a corresponding step-change in Manchester Airport's economic contribution, increasing to over £16 billion in GVA and supporting up to 165,000 jobs across the North by 2050. The airport's catchment would grow to include 260,000 businesses within 90 minutes' travel time, up from 75,000. Overall public transport use would grow from 20% today to up to 45%.

60m+ potential passengers per year

£16bn+ potential GVA across the North

165,000 jobs supported - potential employment impact

Manchester Airport has a catchment area of over 17 million people within 100 kilometres.



Like Europe's most successful economic regions, the opportunity is not simply to serve a large population, but to help that population prosper.

These comparisons also point to a way forward. From the late 1980s, the Dutch government backed Rotterdam and Schiphol, the country's two strategic gateways, with sustained national investment, most notably in the surface links connecting them to the wider economic opportunity. Driven by the 'Golden Triangle', a public-private partnership between the airport, KLM, and government, the result illustrates the scale of opportunity that follows when infrastructure investment and strategic backing are sustained over the long term, allowing a region to build on its comparative advantage and deliver economic growth.

This comes at a time when the North is once again front and centre with a new Prime Minister and No. 10 North opening in Manchester city centre. With the new Government's desire to refocus on rebalancing the country, Manchester Airport can support globally competitive sectors to scale, increase inward investment by maintaining direct access to key markets, and anchor the North's integration into global flows of trade, capital, and talent.

NORTHERN POWERHOUSE RAIL

Unlocking the airport's full potential requires coordinated action across the wider economic and transport system. Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) is the most important of these and represents the next phase of backing required to unlock Manchester Airport's catchment area.

NPR will grow the number of people who can quickly and reliably access the airport. For West and South Yorkshire, it is especially important given that poor trans-Pennine connectivity continues to limit the extent to which firms and workers can access the airport's international network.

This reflects a broader shift in the nature of the challenge. Over several decades, Manchester Airport and its public and private shareholders have invested to remove many of the site-based constraints that once limited growth. Runway 2, the Manchester Airport Transformation Programme and successive investments in facilities and surface access have created substantial capacity for future expansion. The question is now less about the airport's ability to accommodate growth and more about the Northern economy's ability to lever its strategic assets to generate it.

Greater Manchester's experience demonstrates that transformational growth does not emerge from individual projects alone. It is the product of a clear long-term vision, purposeful intervention, and a sustained commitment to delivery. The airport formed part of a wider programme of investment in transport, regeneration, housing, skills and innovation that strengthened the city-region's economic fundamentals over many years.

The same principles must now be applied at a pan-northern level. Realising the full benefits of Manchester Airport will require sustained investment in regional connectivity, continued support for the export-oriented sectors identified within the Industrial Strategy and Northern Growth Strategy, and a long-term commitment to work at scale to strengthen the conditions that support economic growth.

At a time when Britain continues to lag many of its international peers on investment, the wider policy environment will also matter. One of the central lessons from Greater Manchester's transformation is that investors respond to clarity, consistency and long-term ambition. Replicating that success across the North will require a stable and supportive environment for investment, backed by clear strategic priorities and a commitment to accelerate delivery through effective partnership working.

Realising the full benefits of Manchester Airport will require:

- **Sustained investment in regional connectivity**
- **Continued support for the export-oriented sectors identified within the Industrial Strategy and Northern Growth Strategy**
- **Long-term commitment to work at scale to strengthen the conditions that support economic growth.**

Manchester Airport's future is therefore inseparable from the future of the Northern economy itself. The capacity is in place: the challenge now is whether government, business and civic leaders can show the same long-term ambition and commitment to partnership working that underpinned Runway 2; using investment and purposeful intervention to unlock a new phase of growth for the North and support a more balanced and productive British economy.

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Metro —— Dynamics

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Metro Dynamics was founded in 2015 to create lasting capacity in places, supporting devolution, investment, regeneration and inclusive economic growth across the UK.

It works with public and private sector partners, including government, councils, Mayoral Combined Authorities, academia, business, investors and housing associations, to help towns, cities and regions develop investible strategies and deliver place-based change.

Its' expertise combines analysis, strategy, advocacy and negotiation, project development and implementation, business cases, evaluation and monitoring.

As an independent, employee-owned business, Metro Dynamics places emphasis on collaborative working, practical delivery and helping places unlock economic opportunity for residents, businesses and communities.

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WPI | ECONOMICS

WPI Economics has supported this report as a data insights partner, focused on productivity, trade, international investment, student and visitor numbers and changing land use and values over time.

WPI Economics is an economics, data insights, policy and impact consultancy, but one that is a little different to many others. It draws on backgrounds in government and the private and charitable sectors to produce work designed to make a difference. It is committed to ensuring that everything it does has an impact, reflecting its decision to became a B Corporation.

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