THE KEY CITIES
READY TO MEET THE UK’S BIGGEST CHALLENGES
The Key Cities Group was formed in 2013, comprising 20 of the UK's cities which play a key role in their regional economy.

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www.nlgn.org.uk

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COLLECTIVELY, THE KEY CITIES ARE:

- Home to 5.6 million people
- Worth over £116 billion to the UK economy per annum
- Some of the fastest growing local economies in the UK
- Places with major strengths in both manufacturing and exports
- Five of the top ten goods-exporting cities in the UK
- Home to 250,000 manufacturing jobs in the UK
- The right size for growth – with available land to expand
- Ideal test beds for economic and social innovation
- Poised to play a pivotal role in the delivery of the Government’s Industrial Strategy

THE KEY CITIES OFFER

THROUGH PARTNERSHIP WITH CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS AND EACH OTHER, THE KEY CITIES WILL DELIVER:

- Higher Productivity
- Stronger Growth
- Higher employment in better paid, more secure jobs
- A more inclusive economy
- More meaningful dialogue with those who feel economically and politically excluded
- Regenerated and sustainable cities with affordable housing
The Key Cities is a unique collaboration: cross-party; North and South; coastal, rural, urban; industrial and maritime. We orchestrate a huge diversity of ideas, population and economies. Yet we do this because we have much in common. We know our economies must change to meet the social and technological challenges of the 21st Century. We know our economies must change to work for everyone and end the “left-behind” feeling of many of our citizens. We know our economies must change to meet the challenges of the Industrial Strategy and of Britain’s changing role in the world. Above all, we know that we can help drive this change.

Our cities are compact enough to be agile, large enough to make a difference. We want to work in partnership with Government to harness our strengths and achieve lasting economic impact. If all Key Cities increase productivity levels to the England average, collectively we will add £21.4 billion a year to the UK economy; £214 billion over the next decade. We are confident that, given the right levers, we can achieve this.

We offer the chance to address long-standing issues of economic imbalance by building prosperous places that work for everyone. This document is the beginning of what I very much hope can be an enormously fruitful partnership between the Key Cities, Government and other partners to deliver a strong and sustainable economy of the future.

Give Key Cities the tools and we will do the job.

Cllr. Peter Box CBE
Chair of the Key Cities Group and Leader, Wakefield Council
INTRODUCTION

THE KEY TO A UNITED, PRODUCTIVE FUTURE FOR THE UK
The UK faces a series of particularly demanding economic challenges over the coming decade: raising productivity, providing affordable housing, addressing inequality between places and creating a modern infrastructure. The scale of these challenges is only intensified by the fact that they must be met while adapting to withdrawal from the European Union.

The UK’s Key Cities are an integral part of any successful response to these challenges. Ranging in population from approximately 100,000 to 700,000, the Key Cities constitute 5.8 million people. Key Cities also deliver a GVA of £116 billion per annum to the UK economy, equivalent to the GVA of Yorkshire and The Humber. ³

£116bn
GVA of Key Cities

£ =10bn
The Key Cities’ centrality to meeting the big challenges facing the country is far more than a question of size.

The Key Cities include some of the most productive and innovative locations in the UK. But they also include some of the poorest and most economically challenging parts. Creating a policy environment within which all Key Cities can achieve the same outcomes as the national average would be a major boost not just to the UK’s economic health but also to the achievement of growth that benefits all parts of the country.

Achieving this inclusive and rebalanced approach to growth is all the more important given the sense of exclusion revealed by the EU membership referendum. With their populations voting overwhelmingly for Leave, engaging and supporting people of the Key Cities must be an integral part of any attempt to address this sense of exclusion and to give the UK a united political and economic future.

The Key Cities stand ready, willing and able to help the UK meet its most pressing challenges. Working with each other, with Government and with the rest of the UK, the Key Cities have the ingenuity, talent and drive to create a more united and more productive future for everyone.

“The Key Cities stand ready, willing and able to help the UK meet its most pressing challenges.”
1 THE KEY TO A UNITED COUNTRY
Across the political spectrum, policymakers have acknowledged that the referendum vote in June 2016 was about more than simply leaving the EU. Studies have shown that a feeling of being left behind from the political and economic life of the UK in many communities strongly influenced the outcome of that vote.⁴

This sense of exclusion goes further than Brexit. The Commission on the Future of Localism found in January 2018 that: Ending this alienation is now seen as a central goal by all major political parties no matter what their view on Brexit. All parties are talking about the need for “inclusive growth” to address the concerns of the “just about managing” and those “left behind”. A UK scarred by deep economic and political divisions will be a morally, economically and politically weaker country than one united in the face of its challenges.

- 80% of the population feel they have not much or no control over national decisions.⁵
- 50% of Leave voters think Brexit will make no difference to the control they have over national decisions.⁶
- 70% of the population think Brexit will give them the same or even less control over the decisions that affect their local area.⁷
We are going to develop economic plans to ensure that sustainable growth and good jobs reach ALL parts of the country. So that no community or region is held back.

Prime Minister Theresa May
July 2016

If you’re just managing, I want to address you directly … The government I lead will be driven not by the interests of the privileged few, but by yours. We will do everything we can to give you more control over your lives … We will do everything we can to help anybody, whatever your background, to go as far as your talents will take you.

Jeremy Corbyn
Leader of HM Opposition
January 2017

Income and wealth inequality is a continuing social and economic weakness in the UK. It undermines any attempt to build a national consensus on the future of the country and helps to explain why the country voted Brexit.

Vince Cable
Leader of the Liberal Democrats
September 2017

A NEW CONSENSUS IN THE BREXIT ERA
“The Key Cities can play a unique and effective role in addressing these divisions. It is the only genuinely national democratic voice for the places that voted Leave. The group and its member cities offer a vital conduit through which national policy makers can hear from and reach the heartlands of Brexit Britain.

Key Cities voted 60% Leave and 40% Remain, compared to 52% Leave and 48% Remain across the UK and 44% Leave and 56% Remain in the Core Cities.

The Leave vote performed better in every Key City (bar one) than in the UK as whole.

Seven Key Cities had leave votes of over 65%. Clearly, there can be no healing of the divide that now splits the UK unless strenuous efforts are made by policy-makers to connect with the urban leave vote. Reaching out to Leave voters means reaching out to the Key Cities.

Key City councils are ready and able to play a central role in connecting alienated voters with the big decisions on the economy and wider society. Achieving this will mean not only Key City councils deepening democratic engagement within their own places, but also having the necessary freedoms, powers and resources to make that democratic engagement meaningful.

“Reaching out to Leave voters means reaching out to the Key Cities.”
KEY CITIES
- LEAVE vote (over 65%)
- Voted LEAVE
- Voted REMAIN

EU REFERENDUM RESULTS
- Key Cities: 40% Remain, 60% Leave
- Core Cities: 44% Remain, 56% Leave
- UK: 48% Remain, 52% Leave
The Key to Boosting Productivity and Growth
Productivity growth in the UK has remained largely stagnant for ten years. It now lags 26% behind the United States and 15% behind the average of G7 countries. Failure to address this will inevitably lead to fewer exports, weaker innovation, less growth, lower employment and poorer living standards.

Key Cities are already addressing the challenge head on:

- Derby, Portsmouth and Southampton have all achieved productivity and exports that are ahead of the national average.
- Plymouth and Sunderland are among the top ten cities in the UK with the largest share of exports going to the EU.
- Tees Valley has the highest percentage of advanced manufacturing of any LEP in the country. Derby, Bradford and Kirklees together employ the highest number of people in manufacturing in the UK, with high concentrations of value-added bespoke engineering.
- Coventry and Derby are among the top ten cities in the UK with the highest number of published patent applications, primarily through their motor industries.
- Norwich was recently identified by the Centre for Cities as one of the five fastest growing cities in the UK.
- Bournemouth is the number one UK city for employment growth in 2017. Southampton, Norwich and Portsmouth are in the top 10 for expected GVA growth.
- Bradford’s £10bn economy is the ninth largest city economy in England. It has the highest productivity per worker (£49,000) of any city in the Northern Powerhouse.
The strong performance of Key Cities accords with a growing evidence base revealing that smaller cities often play a highly significant role in driving a nation’s economic performance. Economic studies have shown that so-called ‘second tier’ cities regularly outperform larger cities across Europe and provide a better economic and social return on both infrastructure and other investment. There is increasing evidence that the economic benefits of scale once associated only with the largest conurbations can operate just as well and often better in smaller cities. However, strong performance on productivity and associated measures is far from being universal across mid-sized cities in the UK. Developing policy and practice which will enable all Key Cities to secure productivity and growth levels in line with national averages would make a major difference to the economic health of the whole country. If all Key Cities perform at the same productivity level as the England average, collectively they will add £21.4 billion to the UK economy annually, or £214 billion over the next decade.

“If all Key Cities perform at the same productivity level as the England average, collectively they will add £21.4 billion to the UK economy annually, or £214 billion over the next decade.”

Predicted added value to UK economy by Key Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Added Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>£21.4bn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2028</td>
<td>£214bn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identifying and unblocking barriers to higher productivity within Key Cities’ economies is vital, whether that be investing in key sectors, providing adequate housing, improving infrastructure or developing skills.

It is also vital that Key Cities’ unique strengths - greater agility and the capacity to focus on very specific areas of competitive advantage - can be deployed, and the barriers to seizing opportunities removed. As the Government’s Industrial Strategy White Paper states:

“... economic growth does not exist in the abstract. It happens in particular places. Cities, towns and rural areas have distinctive comparative advantages. Our national framework will only be effective if it reflects and makes the most of these economic opportunities and challenges.”

This means Government working with places to provide the necessary investment, support and policy context to let cities identify and seize opportunities for higher productivity growth. Most importantly, Key Cities must have the ability to act rapidly and tailor policy to their specific needs. They also have the potential to test out new interventions and solutions ahead of wider national rollout.

Digital technologies are also providing major currently untapped opportunities to raise productivity and forge new sectoral and other partnerships across regions, the wider UK and globally.

Key Cities stand ready to help solve the UK’s productivity puzzle but they need greater powers and resources in areas such as skills, growth strategy, housing and local taxation to be able to deliver fully.
THE KEY TO BOOSTING PRODUCTIVITY AND GROWTH

“Key Cities stand ready to help solve the UK’s productivity puzzle.”

KEY CITY COUNCILS DRIVING PRODUCTIVITY:

- MediaCity has brought more than 250 innovative firms and 7,000 jobs to Salford while the Centre for Robotics and Autonomous Systems at the University of Salford has seen its funding grow by over 200% in the last five years.  

- Bournemouth is home to the highest concentration of high-growth digital tech businesses in the UK.

- Sunderland Software City has already helped over 400 businesses access opportunities and skills programmes. It aims to create 2,000 new jobs in the digital sector by 2020.

- The nuclear power and gas extraction industries are securing major support to innovate and expand based on a coalition of Blackpool and Preston Councils with five universities.

- The Digital Health Enterprise Zone is a £13 million project accelerating digital health innovation in Bradford and across West Yorkshire. The programme is a partnership between Bradford Council and the University of Bradford, BT and the UK Government.

- The South Coast Marine Cluster is driving forward productivity and growth in marine industries with support from a coalition of Plymouth, Portsmouth and Southampton Councils working with universities and innovative companies.

- A major programme of house-building has been led by Wakefield Council, pushing the area’s housing growth rate to one of the highest in the country and well above the national average.
3 THE KEY TO AN INCLUSIVE AND REBALANCED ECONOMY
The UK has by far the highest level of regional inequality of any country in Europe, and 55% of people in poverty in the UK are in work.

There is recognition across the political spectrum of an increasing need for policies and action to ensure the benefits of growth generate higher incomes and more secure work throughout the labour market and across all regions.

The resonance of these calls for ‘inclusive growth’ has only become greater given the sense of exclusion revealed by the Brexit vote. Key Cities offer an important route to delivering productivity and growth that allows tangible improvements in living standards for everyone.

Key Cities reflect the challenges to achieving inclusive growth across places. Across our 20 member cities:

- 15 Key Cities have over 20% of female employees earning below the living wage.
- All Key Cities have over 10% of male employees earning below the living wage.
- 9 Key Cities have over 20% of male employees earning below the living wage.
- No Key Cities are in areas of high social mobility.
“It is not possible to address either national or regional inequality and poverty... without placing Key Cities at the heart of any such effort.”

As a result, it is not possible to address either national or regional inequality and poverty through an inclusive growth model without placing Key Cities at the heart of any such effort.

Key Cities are already meeting these challenges by developing innovative and practical policy programmes to drive inclusive growth. Preston, for example, is internationally recognised for addressing in-work poverty by promoting the living wage, keeping procurement spend local and supporting ethical lenders such as credit unions. Plymouth has placed raising wages and addressing inequality, particularly in health outcomes, at the heart of its city-wide Plymouth Plan. And Coventry, Derby, Norwich, Portsmouth and Southampton all perform well in the PwC/Demos Good Growth Index which assesses the extent to which areas of the UK are delivering inclusive growth. 40

However, as the RSA’s Inclusive Growth Commission noted, inclusive growth will only be delivered when policy and delivery is more integrated, more focused on early intervention and more tailored to the diverse needs of the country. 41 This can only be achieved at a local rather than a national level through more powers, resources and freedoms for Key Cities and other local areas to allow them to deliver growth that works for all.
CONCLUSION
THE KEY TO
THE FUTURE
A united, productive and inclusive future for the UK cannot be achieved without Key Cities. The Key Cities have the scale and potential to act as the catalyst for this future. The size of their collective population, importance to the UK economy and high concentration of Leave voters means they must be at the heart of any effort to deliver change.

Both individually and collectively, the Key Cities are ready, willing and able to meet the challenge.

Key Cities are already pushing ahead with innovative programmes to generate inclusive growth, others are leading the most productive and innovative places in the UK. Key Cities are also poised to play a pivotal part in the Industrial Strategy, providing a greater return on infrastructure and other investment by Government.

This effort will be so much more powerful and effective if it were backed by the necessary freedoms, powers and resources to deliver locally. A paper to be launched in Autumn 2018 will explore the nature of the necessary policy framework in more detail.
THE KEY CITIES
BLACKPOOL
Blackpool continues investing heavily to deliver growth following the remodelling of its seafront by renewing and extending its tram network, extending its central business district and revitalising its iconic visitor attractions including the well-known Winter Gardens. Its Enterprise Zone with its new energy college has attracted more innovative manufacturing businesses in growth sectors. Its Health Works, Mental Health Trailblazer, Project Search and Business Growth initiatives all seek to re-connect those distant from employment with quality work opportunities.

BOURNEMOUTH
Bournemouth has a thriving economy, with two Universities, performing well in Financial Services, the Digital Sector and Tourism. It is the number one place for high growth digital tech businesses and is one of the greenest places in the UK. The Council is driving productivity and inclusive growth through the Dorset Business Growth Programme (£15 million for SMEs); major investments in digital and transport infrastructure; programmes to improve work readiness among young adults; and its 20-year town centre vision.

BRADFORD
Bradford is the UK’s youngest city and one of the most culturally diverse. Investing in young people is key to achieving its ambition to be the fastest growing economy by 2030. Its Economic Strategy aims to take GVA from £10 billion to £14 billion, bringing another 20,000 people into work. 5,000 businesses back the Education Covenant and the pioneering Bradford Pathways programme is connecting young talent to employment and more positive futures.

COVENTRY
Coventry is leading the way in creating a smarter future for the transport sector and beyond, exploiting the city’s unrivalled wealth of research and innovation knowledge to become a truly ‘Smart City’. This expertise is unlocking Coventry’s potential – supporting industry to design, develop and demonstrate products and solutions for the future.
DERBY

Derby is the third fastest growing city-economy with a strong economic base and a rich manufacturing heritage, currently also home to world class businesses like Rolls-Royce, Toyota and Bombardier. Since 2012, employment, productivity and business density have all grown by 5.4, 10 and 18 per cent respectively. Derby City Council takes a strategic role in helping shape the future of the local economy, working closely with its key partners.

DONCASTER

Doncaster’s strong geographical location, rich heritage and established relationships have cultivated forward-looking educational establishments and new businesses, creating exciting employment opportunities for all. Home to the National College for High Speed Rail, iPort and arts venue CAST, Team Doncaster’s approach is helping Doncaster succeed and focus on a bright future.

HULL

Hull is Yorkshire’s Maritime City and UK City of Culture. The City Plan defines its partnership ethos, delivering unprecedented economic, cultural and inclusive growth. Increasing employment, thriving visitor numbers, and an investment programme of over £3 billion have helped to deliver increased manufacturing, research and development productivity.

KIRKLEES

Kirklees is a premier location right at the heart of the UK. Its long standing industrial heritage has flexed and transformed to deliver unrivalled expertise in advanced manufacturing and precision engineering. Innovation, high quality of life and connectivity make Kirklees’s economy resilient and its commitment to business growth is supported by an ambitious plan to deliver 10,000 new homes by 2023, which will attract and retain talent and enable its communities to flourish and prosper.
NEWPORT
Newport is firmly focused on providing better opportunities for all. To secure better economic outcomes for Newport, the council is working with partners across the city and wider region to ensure its communities have the appropriate skills to benefit from the significant investment, such as seen recently in the emerging compound semi-conductor market.

NORWICH
Norwich is vibrant, creative, and a place for ideas. It is one of the five fast growth UK cities and a hotbed of creative and digital businesses, technology companies and research institutes. The city has performed well in productivity growth and knowledge based employment with high business density and strong five-year business survival rates.

PLYMOUTH
Plymouth, ‘Britain’s Ocean City’, has a population of 264,200 and an economy worth £5.2 billion that supports 108,000 jobs. Its economic future rests on world class capabilities in the marine and advanced manufacturing sectors. Great locations like Oceansgate, the UK’s first marine enterprise zone, build on Plymouth’s maritime heritage to drive inclusive growth and create high quality jobs.

PORTSMOUTH
As the UK’s only island city, Portsmouth is the most densely populated local authority area outside central London. Home to the Royal Navy for over 500 years, it has a significant defence cluster and a track-record for innovation, encompassing advanced manufacturing and communication systems including satellites which serve the world. Its naval heritage continues to provide the city with a rich history captured within its world renowned museums.
THE KEY CITIES

PRESTON

Preston is a confident and competitive city, acting as the main economic hub of Central Lancashire. Significant investments such as the £200 million UCLan Masterplan, City Deal infrastructure investments and HS2 will provide the city with a huge economic stimulus and employment demand. Its large workforce provides an ideal location for new investment and growth-hungry businesses.

SALFORD

Salford is a thriving cultural, economic and residential destination, home to 10,500 businesses employing over 133,000 people. Unprecedented levels of economic growth over the last decade, including renowned schemes such as MediaCityUK has transformed the city, creating one of the most highly skilled digital and technical workforces in the Greater Manchester city region.

SOUTHAMPTON

Southampton is undergoing a spectacular transformation. Since the launch of the City Centre Master Plan in 2012, the city has secured £3 billion of investment. In just six years Southampton’s position as the economic powerhouse of the south coast has been cemented, with an unemployment rate reduced to 2.5 per cent and new training and job opportunities created for over 10,000 residents.

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA

Southend-on-Sea has ambitious plans for 2050, developing a borough-wide vision for the future and also working with six other local authorities on a unified South Essex 2050 plan for growth. This bold strategy will deliver ambitious digital, housing, commercial, cultural, education, health and major infrastructure projects.
SUNDERLAND
Sunderland is proud of its highly productive economy and is working hard to nurture key sectors of automotive and advanced manufacturing; software; and financial and customer services to provide opportunities for everyone. These efforts are supported by a collaborative approach, innovative research environment and skills support provision for Sunderland, alongside first class infrastructure and connectivity.

TEES VALLEY
With a population of 670,000, Tees Valley comprises the local authority areas of Darlington, Stockton-on-Tees, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland. As a world leader in chemicals, health and advanced manufacturing, it stands out for innovation, creativity and diversity. The 4,500-acre area at the South Tees Development Corporation is currently the UK’s greatest regeneration opportunity. It aims to create 20,000 new jobs and to boost international investment and local supply chains, helping create an inclusive economy.

WAKEFIELD
Wakefield is committed to Good Growth by ensuring its ongoing economic success benefits the whole district. Its incubation space and business accelerator programmes are aimed at growing knowledge-intensive businesses supported by recent projects like the £7 million Advanced Skills and Innovation Centre. Its internationally recognised cultural assets help accelerate impact on skills challenges by linking the ambitions for its residents to the city’s flourishing creative and cultural sector.

WOLVERHAMPTON
Wolverhampton—one of the top ten growing economies in the UK—is a city of opportunity with £3.7 billion of investment in citywide regeneration. In 2011, the city set out its ‘Prosperity for All’ strategy focusing on inclusive growth and collaboration. Partnership working including Work Box and Wolves at Work (a partnership between DWP and the City of Wolverhampton Council) have been critical to improving skills and employment opportunities locally.
NOTES

1. Based on 2016 ONS Gross Value Added (Balanced) by Local Authority datasets.
2. Based on 2016 ONS Business Register and Employment Survey data.
3. Calculation based on 2016 ONS Gross Value Added (Balanced) by Local Authority datasets.
4. See National Centre for Social Research. 2017. The vote to leave the EU: Litmus test or lightning rod. Available at: http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39149/bsa34_brexit_final.pdf
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
16. Based on 2016 ONS Business Register and Employment Survey data.
18. Ibid., p. 43.
20. Ibid., p. 18.
22. Based on 2016 ONS Subregional Productivity: Labour Productivity (GVA per hour worked and GVA per filled job) indices by UK NUTS2 and NUTS3 subregions.
26. Based on Gross Value Added (Balanced) by Local Authority 2016 and Total Jobs 2016. The projected increase in GVA assumes all Key Cities achieve the England average for GVA per workforce jobs of £50,270.
31. Ibid., p. 11.
32. Ibid., p. 12.
34. Inequality Briefing. 2015. Regional inequality in the UK is the worst in Western Europe. Briefing 61. Available at: http://inequalitybriefing.org/graphics/briefing_61.pdf
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.