

Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region

Strategic Framework for Action

Executive Summary

The public and private sectors have a strong and successful record of working together across the conurbation and wider region. The complexity of solutions required to create urban renaissance and nationally and internationally competitive economic growth require even greater levels of cooperation across the Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region to ensure integrated and accelerated policy alignment and project delivery.

New City Region connected, coordinated and cross-border working, and supporting policy and financial interventions, will increase economic growth, individual and community prosperity, business confidence and environmental sustainability in our urban core and beyond. This City Region can play a more active and successful role in improving national GVA and wealth creation, relieving pressure on London and the South East, and in enhancing the international competitiveness of the country. Our new approach will ensure that strategic policies for spatial planning, economic development, skills and employment, transport, regeneration, housing, the reduction of carbon emissions and environmental sustainability, and quality of life are aligned and mutually supportive and reinforcing. The local authority Leaders of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Telford, Walsall and Wolverhampton will come together with the West Midlands Regional Assembly, Advantage West Midlands, the regional Learning and Skills Council and the business community to form **the Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region Growth and Prosperity Board**. Its work will be posited on four key outcomes:

- Creating Employment and Prosperity
- Connecting People with Opportunities
- Connecting the City Region
- Creating a Better Quality of Life

The achievement of these outcomes will be realised through **strategic policy interventions** that are mutually supportive and reinforcing, through alignment with existing and future **regional strategies**, and will be expressed through a series of **Joint Investment Plans**.

All City Region strategic policy interventions will be framed and delivered taking maximum account of environmental sustainability and the **reduction of carbon**

emissions. The City Region partners commit themselves to be innovative and ambitious in the pursuit of this objective.

Key outcomes

Creating Employment and Prosperity

To have increasing numbers of people in work by building upon the economic strengths of the City Region through encouraging innovation, high levels of investment by existing, new national and international businesses, and by developing and marketing a complementary network of attractive, competitive well connected locations.

Connecting People with Opportunities

To have a workforce with the right skills for every individual and business to succeed, with increasing levels of economic activity, increased qualifications at all levels, and decreasing levels of worklessness.

Connecting the City Region

To build environmentally sustainable internal and external integrated transport structures and services that connect people, businesses, and towns and cities with the opportunities to succeed and prosper in the modern economy.

Creating a Better Quality of Life

To have a growing population, with increasing numbers of people living, working and relaxing in all parts of the City Region, and with all individuals and communities enjoying success, prosperity, rising aspirations and a cleaner, greener environment.

City Region Strategic Added Value

The ability of the City Region to realise its full competitive and productive potential, driven by robust levels of business confidence and investment, is impaired by a lack of geographic and policy connectivity.

Our public authorities have a strong and successful record of working together with each other, and with the private sector. However, the number and complexity of different organisations with a role in the formulation and delivery of policies for spatial planning, economic development, skills and employment, transport, regeneration, housing, the reduction of carbon emissions and environmental sustainability, and overall quality of life issues, makes co-ordination difficult in the very areas where decisive and concerted action is needed. This complexity also makes it impossible for individuals and businesses to understand how, and by whom, key strategic decisions are formulated, taken and delivered.

In addition, current administrative boundaries, and the historic dominance of central government over regional and local governance structures, has created an unhelpful and divisive culture of intra city region competition that significantly contributes to the formulation and delivery of policy in rigid and inappropriate geographic and sectoral silos.

There is an urgent need for connected policy formulation and project delivery that reflects the realities of the linkages across the City Region, and beyond into the wider West Midlands.

International experience has demonstrated that a coordinated and collaborative response to such challenges is not unique to this city region. The development of cooperation in city regions such as Lyon, Barcelona and Stuttgart, especially where developed on a **voluntary shared interest basis**, offers many lessons that are applicable to this City Region. The identification of common strategic economic challenges that crossed existing administrative borders has encouraged the development of proportionate city region wide cooperation in many countries. The key to unlocking and maximising the productive potential for growth and prosperity in the Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region, the wider West Midlands region, and through this to the nation as a whole, is to be found in this new connected approach.

The local authority Leaders of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Telford, Walsall and Wolverhampton will come together with the Chairs of the

West Midlands Regional Assembly, Advantage West Midlands, the regional Learning & Skills Council, and a representative of the business community, to build upon existing levels of cooperation in recognition of the unique power and influence that their connected, coordinated and cross border interventions can provide to

- work in a voluntary, visible and accountable partnership to achieve a more **integrated approach to the delivery of large scale urban development, business growth and environmental sustainability** by ensuring that our spatial planning, economic development, skills and employment, transport, regeneration, housing, the reduction of carbon emissions and environmental sustainability, and quality of life policies and interventions are connected, mutually supportive and reinforcing.
- accelerate the delivery of existing and forthcoming regional and sub regional strategies, most notably the **Regional Economic Strategy, the Regional Spatial Strategy, the Black Country Study, and the Regional Sustainable Development Framework**, and to positively influence the revisions of those strategies that are currently in progress.
- work collaboratively across borders to tackle the common challenges which our communities face so as to **increase national and international competitiveness and productivity, individual prosperity, and public and private sector service provision and delivery in the City Region**, and through this to help to address the problems associated with economic development overheating in London and the South East, and to significantly **improve the overall economic performance of the West Midlands Region, and of the nation as a whole**.
- maximise the efficient and strategic deployment of **public sector finance** and through this to lever in **higher levels of private sector investment** than would result in the absence of City Region interventions.
- **support growth** that serves both City Region, other urban, and rural communities, and **reduces development pressure** on the West Midlands' rural areas to allow the Region to benefit from managed population growth.
- **to utilise the collective powers and influence of the City Region to progressively deliver policies for carbon neutrality and environmental sustainability**.
- Commit to **collective representation to and negotiation with** central Government, and other key agencies and interests as deemed appropriate.

The City Region will also develop other **important strategic, spatial relationships** – with the North and South Midlands, Milton Keynes, and with the South East. Work will be undertaken to ensure that strategic decisions are sensitive to, and complement, the priorities identified by other major city regions and urban areas. This City Region is **uniquely well positioned** to be able to relieve some of the difficult growth trajectories currently challenging London and the South East by absorbing a proportion of the (migratory) population growth that would otherwise gravitate to these areas.

Whilst greater collaboration is vital, it can only take us so far. The potential of the City Region, and of its contribution to increased regional and national competitiveness, prosperity and sustainability, will only be realised in full if central government devolves the **powers, freedoms and flexibilities** that will be identified in our **Joint Investment Plans**.

The City Region Today

The City Region's **greatest asset is its people**. Our population is one of the **youngest, most cosmopolitan and ethnically diverse in Europe with strong links to some of the fastest growing economies in the world**, particularly the Indian sub-continent and China. The Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population as a proportion of the working-age population is substantially higher than the national average and stands at about 30%. The expansion of the European Union has seen increasing numbers of in-migrants, bolstering our economy and growing our already vibrant Eastern European communities. Our connected, coordinated and cross border working and interventions will be designed to help every single person living or working in the City Region to realise his or her own full potential. It is only through the development and utilisation of individual potential that the City Region can deliver its full contribution to the success of the nation.

Birmingham is our core and largest city with about 36% of the City Region's population with Coventry containing a further 11% of the population. The four Black Country boroughs of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton together constitute about 40% of the population while Solihull and Telford each house less than 10%.

We will capitalise on the strengths of the City of Birmingham, the country's largest regional city, and a driver for economic growth and prosperity. The City's young, diverse, growing population, its position at the centre of our air, rail and road networks, its large and increasing knowledge-based economy and its critical cultural assets, provide the opportunity and mainspring for strong, City Region growth over coming decades. Birmingham's designation for example as a **Science City** is contributing to the continued development of innovative, knowledge driven, high technology industries across the City Region, and to significant cooperation and coordination between Birmingham and Warwick Universities. Our urban centres are being revitalised by the strong growth of 'city living' with Birmingham in particular becoming one of the UK's most popular city living locations.

Polycentric Interdependence

A key feature of the Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region is its polycentricism where distinct and diverse identities, economic profiles and growth trajectories underlie the shared characteristics and interests of its cities and towns. Whilst strong mutual economic, social and environmental interdependencies connect all its parts, many common challenges and opportunities impact on and are responded to in a variety of ways across the City Region. These differences express themselves through the functioning of a

number of **local city regions** that exist both within (the Black Country) and within and beyond (Coventry and Warwickshire) the immediate confines of the City Region's borders. Policy interventions will take account of and contribute to the success of these local city regions, and will respect and enhance the identities and economic and social characteristics of all parts of the City Region.

Although the City Region is polycentric the local authority areas of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Telford, Walsall and Wolverhampton are interdependent economically, socially and environmentally. One of the most distinctive characteristics of the City Region is the increasingly complex interdependency between its constituent cities and towns in terms of jobs, shopping, education and leisure activities and consequent patterns of movement. There is, for example, substantial employment-related commuting into Birmingham, especially from Coventry, Sandwell, Solihull and Wolverhampton. There are also important concentrations of activity located elsewhere particularly around Coventry which has its own economic linkages and dependant commuters. Interdependency in the City Region is being driven by the provision of business infrastructure, housing, cultural and lifestyle opportunities that individual primary centres cannot offer on their own.

The City Region has fairly stable **in-commuting** rates of roughly 10% of the working-age population. Compared to the 23% in-migration seen nationally, these rates of in-commuting are comparatively low, largely because the City Region is a **fairly self-contained economy** based on a network of areas that are highly inter-dependent. Therefore, while there may be large numbers commuting between its constituent local authority areas, in-commuting from outside is comparatively limited.

In-commuters from outside the City Region primarily originate from an Area of Influence (AOI) which is defined on the basis of in-commuting patterns. South Staffordshire, Bromsgrove, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Lichfield and Warwick each provide over 10,000 in-commuters every day. South Staffordshire is the greatest contributor to in-commuting numbers with over 20,000 people travelling from this district.

Whilst geographically the City Region encompasses Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Telford, Walsall and Wolverhampton, the impact of our joint decision making will have benefits for the whole West Midlands region. The City Region is not an 'economic island': it has rich, complex, mutually beneficial and inter-dependent relationships with adjacent and neighbouring authorities such as Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire. These significant inter-dependencies require broader engagement and agreement on key strategic issues such as spatial planning, economic development, transport, regeneration, housing and quality of life, especially culture, and environmental sustainability. The City Region will therefore work with neighbouring authorities, through the West Midlands Regional Assembly, and

individually as necessary, to ensure that strategic decisions affecting our broader region reflect mutual needs and priorities.

Skills and Unemployment

The Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region is of **central importance to the UK economy**. Large parts of the City Region have traditionally been at the centre of UK manufacturing. In spite of heavy job losses, **manufacturing still remains important because of its high export content and linkages to local services** and its shares of employment and output remain high. In 2004 energy & manufacturing accounted for almost 22% of GVA and for around 16% of total employment in the City Region. The end of the dominance of traditional industrial production is being paralleled by the beginnings of a process of change and adaptation to meet the demands of a new national and global economic environment. In many parts of the City Region however, the challenges of de-industrialisation are being accompanied by transitional problems such as comparatively low levels of skills and higher education attainment, poor rates of enterprise creation, high levels of worklessness and serious outward migration, especially of knowledge workers.

The City Region has substantial areas of low skills and high unemployment alongside more prosperous and high-growth areas. The employment rate lies significantly below the regional and national averages whilst the unemployment rate is higher than these comparative indicators. The area has distinctive problems of joblessness related to its large numbers of lone parents, unqualified people, and unemployment in parts of its BME communities. The dependency ratio (measured by the number of young and retired people as a proportion of the working-age population) is slightly higher in the City Region than in the UK.

The incidence of unemployment is by no means evenly spread across the City Region with just 39 out of 195 2005 wards accounting for 50% of JSE claimants. Rates in parts of the BME population exceeded 60% in 2004 in a number of City Region areas. 20-29 year-olds constituted over a quarter of the total unemployed in 2004, while almost 42% were in the 30-59 year-old age bracket.

The City Region suffers from high levels of income and skills deprivation in comparison to the West Midlands regional (WMR) and UK national averages. **Skills deficiencies are most pronounced in the Black Country and Birmingham**, where 20% of the workforce is without qualifications. In general, deprivation indices in the Black Country are consistently higher than the UK average. The workforce in the Black Country is poorly qualified and employers in the sub-region face significant skill gaps and recruitment problems. There are however other parts of the City Region that have a highly skilled and qualified workforce.

Currently, **the proportion of young people involved in education and training remains below the regional and national averages.** About 75% of 16 and 17-year olds took part in education and training in 2004, compared to a national average of almost 78%. This pattern is also reflected in the numbers for work-based training; over 10% of the working-age population was in work-based education or training in the City Region in 2004, 1% below the national figure.

The performance of 15-year olds in the City Region is weaker than the national average, with just over 52% achieving at least 5 A*-C GCSE grades in 2004. In 2004 there were 763,000 people qualified to NVQ Levels 2-4 representing over 46% of the working age population compared to a national average of approximately 51%. In part as a consequence of this the City Region lags behind the West Midlands region and the UK in 'knowledge economy' indicators. Employment in knowledge occupations and knowledge industries as a proportion of total employment is lower in the City Region than in the West Midlands region as a whole.

The City Region makes up less than half of the West Midlands total working-age population that is qualified to NVQ 2-4. This highlights the fact that there are certain parts of the surrounding areas with highly-skilled workers outside its boundaries. The Area of Interest (AOI), for example, notwithstanding under achievement in Staffordshire, houses a considerable skilled work-force some of whom commute into the City Region to meet its demand for more qualified workers.

Employment Growth

The City Region has seen rates of output and employment growth that are higher than the national and regional averages, particularly in the following 'key' sectors;

- Banking & finance
- Professional services
- Creative industries
- Computing services
- Electronics
- Construction
- Distribution
- Retailing
- Air transport
- 'Other' business services
- Public administration
- Defence
- Education
- Health & social work
- Hotels & catering.

All these sectors have experienced strong output and employment growth. The computer and ICT services sector has developed strongly, particularly in Solihull and Coventry (which forms part of the high-tech development extending along the M42 and M40) while there is a high concentration of professional services in Birmingham (the City Region has the highest earnings in the West Midlands for both men and women, **since it houses the region's business and financial activities**). Logistics, too, is becoming an increasingly important employer in the area as the City Region lies at the heart of the UK's motor and rail network and also has international airports and freight transport facilities.

The main drivers of growth in the City Region are forecast to be professional services, computing services, public services, construction, retailing and distribution, and hotels and catering. Particular City Region attention will be paid to the growing creative industries sector.

However, the slowdown in consumer services, efficiency gains in the public sector and increased outsourcing in financial & business services suggests that employment growth may slow. Cautious household spending may hold back growth in several consumer service industries centred on Birmingham and Coventry. Transport & communications and professional & business services in the City Region are likely to show positive but modest growth in the medium term. While output growth in manufacturing improved in 2006 due to strong growth in demand from the Euro-zone, the outlook for the medium term remains cautious as input costs remain high and as higher interest rates curb investment demand. Industrial pockets, particularly in the Black Country, Telford and Birmingham will be affected by weak demand and higher input prices facing the manufacturing sector. In addition, whilst **GVA per worker is higher in the City Region than in the West Midlands region as a whole, its rate of increase is lower than the rate in the region.**

Business Creation

There is considerable churn of businesses in the City Region, matched only by London, and survival rates are higher than in many city regions that perform better on other indicators of business activity. However, **business formation in knowledge industries is lagging behind many other comparator city regions.**

In 2004, an average of 2.4 VAT registrations per 1,000 inhabitants took place in the City Region compared to 4.8 per 1,000 residents in the London City region, and 3.0 in Manchester and Bristol. However, the City Region outperformed Liverpool, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield city regions. VAT de-registrations at 2.6 per 1,000 inhabitants in the City Region were slightly higher than registrations. New registrations accounted for 11% of the total end-of-year

stock in 2004, similar to the national average, and the average in other comparator city regions.

The numbers of VAT registrations per 1,000 inhabitants in knowledge industries averaged 1 in the City Region, compared to 2.8 in London and 1.5 in Bristol. It was marginally better than Newcastle and Sheffield and on a par with the Nottingham.

The concentration of new businesses in the City Region indicated by VAT concentration per 1,000 inhabitants stood at 22.9 in 2004, compared to 38.4 in London, 28.6 in the Bristol, 16.8 Liverpool, and 17.1 Newcastle city regions.

Research Funding

The six main Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in the City Region, viz the Universities of Aston, Birmingham, Central England, Coventry, Warwick and Wolverhampton, collectively generated £146,020m in research grants and contracts in 2004/2005 (HESA Planning Plus 2006). Approximately 50% of this funding was secured by the University of Birmingham, with a further 40% attracted by the University of Warwick.

Around 8% of the total City Region figure came from commercial sources, with another 16% being received from UK based charities, and just over 6% from the European Union. The overwhelming balance of the remaining research funding was provided by UK public or statutory organisations in the form of OST Research Councils, central and local Government, and local health and hospital authorities.

Creating Employment and Prosperity

We will sustain and grow prosperity to create a high skilled, well-paid knowledge economy where both service and high value added manufacturing companies are competing successfully in the global economy. We will capitalise on the strengths of the City of Birmingham, the U.K's largest regional city, as a driver for economic growth and prosperity. We will utilise the Birmingham Science City initiative to continue to develop high technology industries across the City Region, especially those innovating in technologies of environmental sustainability. We will also continue to develop our **business and professional services** and **creative industries** both in their own right, and in view of their capacity to support wider economic development. City Region interventions in support of these two key sectors will be prioritised. With partners we will help to foster an enterprise culture and improve the competitiveness of the City Region's small and medium sized enterprises.

We will seek to achieve these aims taking maximum account of environmental sustainability and the reduction of carbon emissions. The City Region is well placed to affect significant steps towards **carbon neutrality**, and to exploit the economic development potential of new environmental technologies. Our City Region economic development and investment attraction interventions will complement our policies for carbon neutrality, especially in transport and building construction.

The most prosperous city regions are those which offer a comprehensive network of outstanding competitive locations – both in urban centres and in business and industrial parks. Whilst the City Region offers a wide-ranging portfolio of attractive sites and premises, we intend to expand our offer. We will provide a **comprehensive and complementary network of competitive locations with excellent connections to national, European, and international markets** to meet the needs of our indigenous businesses and inward investment. We currently have a strong agreement across the City Region through the **Regional Spatial Strategy** on the potential locations which are suitable for employment growth.

We will seek to align and coordinate decisions and funding to ensure that this network of high quality, competitive locations has quick and reliable access to the national transport network, capitalising on our location at the hub of the U.K. We will ensure, through **effective, integrated spatial planning and implementation** that these key employment locations are linked to a strategic transport infrastructure.

Working with regional and sub regional partners we will create a **strategy of propositional marketing** to attract new inward investors through an

understanding of their specific needs and requirements. We will seek to **provide a comprehensive location package** including planning, access, public transport links, skilled workforce provision and business support in order to raise the competitiveness of City Region sites as a global location of choice. Part of this package approach will include **brokerage of effective, productive links to the City Region's universities**. We will continue to invest in our town and city centres, upgrade our road, rail and public transport networks serving these centres and invest in more mixed and attractive housing stock.

The **continued expansion of Birmingham International Airport** is an important component of our offer to new inward investors, and has a key role in the development of the growth potential of our existing businesses.

We will ensure that we promote spatially balanced economic growth **linking areas of opportunity and need**. This will allow us to strengthen the complementary economic roles performed by the different parts of the City Region, whilst also being aware of potential developments beyond our immediate boundaries. **Our transport investment proposals will improve access to employment opportunities for people in our most disadvantaged communities.**

Our new approach to creating employment and prosperity will lead to increased numbers of people in work by building upon the economic strengths of the City Region through encouraging innovation, high levels of investment by existing, new national and international businesses, and by developing and marketing a complementary network of attractive, competitive well connected locations.

By 2020 this will result in the City Region having

- higher than the national average earnings,
- wealth creation per person above the national average,
- higher than the national average employment rate,
- an unemployment rate below the national average,
- a higher percentage of knowledge workers than the national average,
- increasing numbers of high skilled, high paid jobs,

Connecting People with Opportunities

The future restructuring of the Region's economy is set to continue with significant shifts in the balance of employment demand. This will result in a total demand of 350,000 by 2015, 80% of which will be by way of replacement demand. There will be fewer jobs for people with no qualifications and more complex skills will be required as a foundation for specialist skills development, whether in employment or as pre-employment support. This challenge also extends beyond the City Region given that the wider region is a key supplier of labour and thus central to our competitiveness. Our ambition is to:

Tackle worklessness – we will work to ensure that employers understand the benefits of diversity as an economic/business imperative, particularly within the context of the dramatic changes to the City Region's population. We will seek to create employer commitment to increasing targeted recruitment with particular emphasis on identified groups such as lone parents, people on Incapacity Benefit and other Benefits, people with low skills or no qualifications, all of which will include large numbers of people from the BME population in disadvantaged wards. We will assist the economically inactive and those with multiple barriers to employment, by working in partnership to remove barriers such as lack of childcare, transport and skills. We will work with employers to encourage further the use of flexible working practices.

Increase skill levels - we will ensure that the workforce has the skills to compete in the global economy. We will improve participation and progression across the City Region and enable individuals to progress into employment with vocational training support.

Graduate Retention and higher level skills – we will pursue a coordinated strategy of engagement between employers and Higher Education Institutions to retain a higher percentage in employment of graduates who study and qualify in the City Region. This will utilise the growing evidence base of short and longer term graduate career and location decisions that is being constructed by the City Region. We will implement a joint strategy to develop the higher level skills needed for higher value products and services, which are fundamental to the achievement of our growth aspirations.

We will:

- ensure that we are working with the grain of the City Region labour market where there is a high degree of mobility across the conurbation rather than within the artificial confines of individual administrative boundaries.

- improve the **links between employment need and opportunity**, especially in targeting major employment creation projects, thereby maximizing opportunities for disadvantaged groups across the City Region. Simultaneously,
- maximise employer engagement and “buy-in” through a single coherent employer offer and sector jobs and skills plans and remove the widespread confusion among employers caused by the multiplicity of competing schemes and initiatives.
- utilise the power of the public sector partners on the City Region shadow Growth and Prosperity Board to coordinate and direct employment interventions targeted on specific disadvantaged or under-represented groups.
- fully integrate and align our employment and skills strategy with the wider economic development and regeneration strategies being developed by the City Region and its partners, especially in housing, transport, health and physical regeneration.
- integrate and align funds and resources across the City Region with the significant benefits of efficiency/economies of scale creating the potential for much greater impact.

Our new approach to connecting people with opportunities will lead to a workforce with the right skills for individuals and businesses to succeed, with increasing levels of economic activity, increased qualifications at all levels, and decreasing levels of worklessness.

By 2020 this will result in the City Region having

- higher than national average basic, intermediate and higher level skills and qualifications,
- above national average numbers of skilled and qualified entrepreneurs, self-employed and business start ups.
- made a major move towards no one in work or seeking work being without at least the minimum vocational skills and qualifications to gain and maintain a job,
- improving levels of skills and education of those already with qualifications and in work,

Connecting the City Region

The **efficient movement of people and goods within and through the City Region** is a critical aspect of enhancing the economy of the wider Midlands region – and the nation – in a sustainable way. Movement patterns – and the infrastructure required to meet transport needs do not respect administrative boundaries.

Through the alignment of funding and decision making influence, important road and rail projects will be taken forward and accelerated to **link the most disadvantaged communities with employment centres**, enhance the efficient movement of freight, enable the growth of key centres, improve access to previously unused employment and housing land, and to relieve pressure on local centres.

Connections to **key national, European and global markets will be improved**, especially through support for the continued expansion of Birmingham International Airport.

We will seek to utilise best practice, in conjunction with most advanced technological solutions available to us, to promote environmental sustainability and the reduction of carbon emissions through our coordinated transport interventions.

We will **widen the pool of labour available to City Region businesses and will link more people to job opportunities**. All individuals within the City Region will be able to make their desired employment and learning journeys with greater ease. Transport interventions will also seek to link City Region residents with key culture and leisure opportunities.

New City Region working will enable **more streamlined and speedier decision-making**. We will work jointly to develop proposals for how the operations of buses, coaches, the Metro and trains should be enhanced, and how improvements to the motorway network, strategic and local roads can be provided. We will ensure we deliver a sustainable transport infrastructure and services that support our economic growth, housing, regeneration and environmental objectives.

This commitment will be aligned with the results of the **Transport Innovation Fund** feasibility study into how best to manage traffic demand and congestion. The commitment will also be aligned with the delivery of existing and forthcoming West Midland regional strategies, namely the **Regional Spatial Strategy, the Regional Transport Strategy, the Local Transport Plan, the Regional Freight Strategy, the Regional Economic Strategy and the Black Country Study**, and working in conjunction with the Regional Transport Partnership.

Our new approach to connecting the City Region will lead to environmentally sustainable internal and external integrated transport structures and services that connect people, businesses, and towns and cities with the opportunities to succeed and prosper in the modern economy.

By 2020 this will result in the City Region having,

- less congested roads enabling car, public transport, freight, and service vehicles, free flowing access at all times,
- above the national average levels of people using our bus services and our rail services and rail stations,
- a complete Midland Metro network,
- Birmingham International Airport equipped to deal with more local, national and international travellers.

Creating a Better Quality of Life

Our connected, co-ordinated and cross border interventions will be developed to **substantially increase the City Region's population** through the alignment of strategic planning and household growth decisions. There will be a particular focus on the retention and attraction of those economically active and independent households that currently do not aspire to live in the City Region, and on **ensuring that all communities enjoy prosperity and rising aspirations**.

Central to this will be the development of a cleaner environment and the provision of improved green spaces and infrastructure. We are committed to shaping and assisting the delivery of quality places that improve and enhance the living experience of all our citizens. An ambitious, collaborative approach to enhanced cultural, sporting and leisure facilities and events, especially through the development of important and successful venues, will be implemented. In particular, we will develop and deliver a coherent City Region "cultural offer" to help to promote the area on regional, national and international stages.

We will **align our collective influence and funding** to ensure that our household growth policies and interventions fully support and enhance our commitment to environmental sustainability and the reduction of carbon emissions.

We are committed to an **accelerated implementation of the Urban Renaissance priority** enshrined in the current West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy. We will also work with non metropolitan and regional partners to ensure that our household growth strategies are connected, co-ordinated and mutually supportive. This will offer the best conditions for the realisation of our urban renaissance objectives whilst assisting partners outside of the City Region to respond successfully to their own housing growth requirements.

We are committed to examining the **potential for household growth beyond** the reference points set out in the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 2 Revision Spatial Options.

The City Region partners will continue to develop and direct household growth policy as a potential **City Region New Growth Point**. This will build upon the designation of Birmingham/Solihull, Coventry, and Telford as City Region New Growth Points, and will include the Black Country Study's ambitions for growth and competitiveness.

The City Region will provide quality housing to **attract and retain high-income employees of the knowledge economy** in part through the regeneration of

neighbourhoods that currently deter such potential residents. Developing mixed tenure and mixed income communities in association with transport, skills, and economic growth strategies, will increase the range of housing opportunities available. It will also improve the places and environment for all City Region residents. Delivering this City Region housing strategy and the potential land use changes it implies, will be integral to the realisation of our objectives of increasing levels of business confidence and activity, of creating economic growth and restructuring, of transport improvements and of regeneration in the urban areas.

The City Region will develop its **cultural, leisure and sporting facilities and events** on a collaborative and connected basis. Central to this approach will be an enhanced recognition of the important role that the interaction between different cultures plays in defining and identifying the City Region both internally and externally. A **coordinated cultural, leisure and sporting strategy** will contribute to both the economic diversification, and attractiveness, of the City Region. We will build upon our existing network of venues to enhance their national and international status and importance. This will be developed in conjunction with regional partners to ensure that interventions and policies are mutually supportive.

Our new approach to creating a better quality of life will lead to a growing population, with increasing numbers of people living, working and relaxing in all parts of the City Region, with all communities enjoying success, prosperity, rising aspirations and a cleaner, greener environment.

By 2020 this will result in the City Region having

- all communities enjoying, success, prosperity, and rising aspirations.
- increasing numbers of people living, working and relaxing in all its parts
- a large and wide ranging mixture of modern housing able to meet the needs of any individual or family,
- a cleaner and greener environment with above national average levels of recycling
- made progress towards carbon neutrality,
- an international reputation for its cultural, sporting and leisure facilities and events.