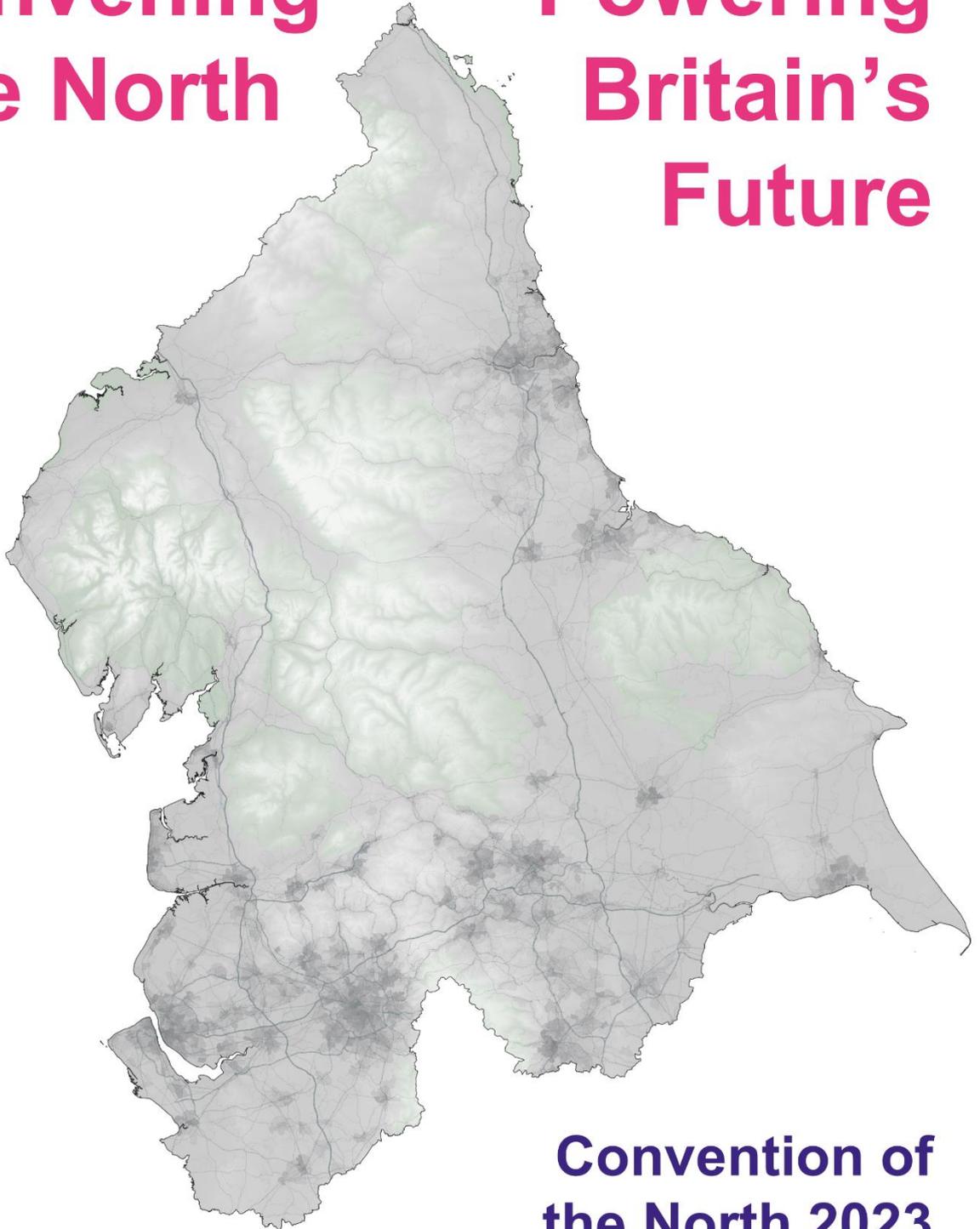


2023

CONVENTION OF THE
north

**Convening
The North**

**Powering
Britain's
Future**



**Convention of
the North 2023**

NP11



NORTH

Introduction

We're convening the North: uniting the institutions, ideas, communities and voices to power Britain's future

The Convention of the North was set up in 2018 to create a powerful unifying voice for the North, with a positive vision of how we can lead economic and social transformation. It is a cross party and cross-sector initiative, representing all parts of the North behind the united proposition that together we can drive a better future not only for our region, but for Britain as a whole. With Britain facing recession and a cost of living crisis in 2023, the need for a forward looking, optimistic agenda for growth and renewal has rarely been greater.

This paper has been developed ahead of the Convention through conversations with Northern political and business leaders, and with other partner and policy organisations. It is intended to help frame the debate at the Convention, by setting out the North's opportunity to power Britain's future, as well as outlining the key opportunities and challenges that we face as we convene in **Greater Manchester**.

The Convention brings together Northern leaders across the spectrum of our institutions and organisations – Councils, Mayoral Combined Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, businesses, universities, youth parliaments, voluntary sector organisations, health and transport bodies, and others. We have held major Conventions in **Gateshead, Rotherham and Liverpool**. Next year we will be in **West Yorkshire**. Since the Convention began, we have developed a Manifesto for the North that was backed by every major newspaper across the North, and a range of ideas on Levelling Up, Devolution, Net Zero transition and the need to deliver Northern Powerhouse Rail.

Over the last five years the world has seen major upheaval: the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the ensuing cost-of-living crisis. The North has worked together in partnership across our communities and institutions to respond to these challenges. And we are now ready to help drive Britain out of recession. One reflection of our economic potential is that transport demand has recovered faster in the North, after Covid, than in any other part of the country. The fact that this rapid bounce back in demand has been undermined by unreliable and infrequent rail services, also highlights the barriers to growth we still need to overcome.

In the past year, we have seen major developments from **Bradford** being announced as Capital of Culture for 2025 through to further devolution agreements for **York and North Yorkshire** and the **North East**. 74% of people in the North now live in areas that benefit from devolution deals.

The North has the strongest set of governance and delivery institutions and partnerships across the public, private and VCSE sectors of any part of England, and the aim of the Convention is to use these as the platform to build a programme of collaborative activity that can drive sustainable and inclusive growth for the UK.



The North at a glance

Our Economy

15.2m people
£367bn annual GVA
£88.5bn exports
50.7% of England's
 renewable energy

Our Environment

33% of England's forests
49% of running water
11 National Parks and
 Areas of Outstanding Natural
 Beauty – covering **30%** of the
 North's surface area.

Our Culture

69,703 listed buildings
1064 libraries
345 museums
317 parks and gardens
7 World Heritage sites

Our Assets

- Proud People** 
- Phenomenal Natural Assets** 
- Distinct Economic Strengths** 
- Connecting the Union** 
- Unique Capacity to deliver** 

Our Principles

- Strong Sense of Identity** 
- A Positive Vision** 
- Actions Not Just Words** 
- Partnership Working Together** 
- Devolution of Power and Decision-making** 



Powering Britain's Future Prosperity

The North has the assets, people and history to power Britain's future economy. But we won't be able to realise that potential if we just carry on with the current status quo. In 2016 the Northern Powerhouse Independent Review (NPIER) showed how increasing the North's productivity by supporting its prime capabilities, would generate £100bn of additional output by 2050. But the combination of insufficient focus on these capabilities across the North, lack of investment and the impact of Covid have widened the North's productivity gap since then.

The good news is that the North has many of the components to drive the next industrial revolution. However, to achieve the North's potential calls for a much more integrated approach to growth, that is more purposely inclusive, as well as rooted in the Net Zero transition. The Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review (NPIER) refresh, which will be published later in 2023, assesses various policy scenarios and will restate the case that with the right combination of inclusive, technological, developmental and policy conditions, the North could grow faster than any other part of the country by 2050.

The Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review Refresh

Transport for the North, the Northern Evidence Network, and partners are in the process of refreshing the 2016 NPIER, which will be published later in 2023. Drawing on a mix of sectoral data and local insights, the report will review the North's economy; including the prime capabilities first identified in 2016; Energy, Digital, Advanced Manufacturing and Health Innovation

The refresh will model the impact of a set of mutually complementary scenarios;

- **Technology transformation:** investing in R&D, entrepreneurialism and technology adoption
- **Net Zero:** investing in Net Zero
- **Inclusive Productivity:** Supporting the Health, Wellbeing and Skills of the Northern Workforce
- **Development Supply:** Boosting supply of affordable and private housing, commercial property

Draft findings suggest that a range of policies in line with the four categories, when combined together, have the potential to deliver a major boost to the Northern economy. **The policy outputs of the Convention will be aligned with the policy levers identified in the NPIER refresh** where possible, in order to maximise the benefit to the North.

For the Convention of the North this is about working together to deliver three interrelated outcomes that will not just transform the North, they will also generate much greater growth for the UK as a whole:

- **Powering Britain's future economy** – developing the key assets to lead Britain's economic future and drive decarbonisation from the North, with major clusters of life sciences innovation, the UK's largest network of renewable energy capacity linking offshore power, with tidal barrage and gigabit production, advanced manufacturing



specialisms, ports, freeports and airports, a fast growing digital and tech economy, and world class natural, cultural and heritage assets

- **Including all our people in a growing economy** – developing a model of inclusive growth that unleashes the potential and talent of all our people, with a highly skilled, healthier, and more productive workforce.
- **Connecting the North** – achieving the scale and agglomeration benefits of a region with 15 million people, through fast and reliable transport and digital connectivity

The need for an integrated approach to improving productivity, prosperity and inclusion for the North has never been greater. The health, social and economic impact of Covid, followed by the cost of living crisis has hit the North hard. But it has also strengthened the determination of our businesses, community organisations and local leaders to build back better. We worked together to support our people and local economies through Covid, and this partnership will be at the heart of building a future that achieves our collective potential. Health and wealth were interconnected during Covid, but this relationship is also central to the North's economic future. Our economic ambitions have to be intertwined with social ambitions for a healthier, better housed and more highly skilled workforce. That is why green investment and green skills, and life sciences innovation and increased healthy life expectancy, are complementary. In combining economic and social investment the North won't just lead the way on Levelling Up, it will power the Britain of the future.

Doing it ourselves – a programme for Northern collaboration

This transformation will be made and developed in the North. It will be built through partnership across Northern institutions, and with Government. Devolution to many parts of the North, with more to come soon, means that we have much of the strategic capacity to develop our own plans for achieving the North's potential and for powering Britain's future. We are already seeing how this critical mass is taking shape, whether that is the franchising of buses in Greater Manchester; innovation in West Yorkshire and Liverpool, industrial decarbonisation clusters in Humber, Tees Valley and Cheshire (comprising half of those across the UK) or inclusive investment plans in the North of Tyne.

The next wave of devolution should bring with it greater spending and fiscal powers. This starts with single departmental-style settlements for places that can enable reprofiling of expenditure on outcomes, not outputs, and to target prevention. But the next step should be further fiscal devolution that enables places to invest from the proceeds of future growth, with Tax Increment Financing and Land Value Capture, alongside regional and local wealth funds.

The business community and local government across the North have been at one in arguing for much greater devolution of skills funding and policy, so that local employers and local leaders can collectively plan and provide for the skills their economies need now and for the future. Nowhere is this needed more than for the growing green economy that will help drive net zero transition. With 50% of the energy generating capacity of the country, and with a critical mass of industrial decarbonisation clusters, the North should be able to drive this transition, creating good quality jobs for our people in the process. But we need the power to plan for the skills provision that can underpin this.



The focus of the 2023 Convention in Manchester is to build the programme that can support this. The **Mapping the North** section analyses key opportunities, challenges and inequalities between areas that need to be addressed, setting the scene for the Convention. The Convention will debate and discuss the ideas set out in the **Our Propositions for powering Britain's future** section. Policy papers to be shared with attendees to support discussions at the Convention will set out why the North is in a strong position to deliver on these themes, together with the outcomes that could be achieved, and an assessment of the barriers that will need to be overcome.

These investable propositions, policy changes, opportunities for collaboration and funding offers can unlock transformational opportunities - fulfilling the potential of the North. This will include dialogue with investors and partners to agree the ideas for the inclusive growth we want to see. The policy papers are set within 3 broad themes which also provide a basis for the summary of the North's key strengths and challenges set out in the sections below:

Running through all of these propositions is the need to strengthen the North's people and communities, and the places where they live through improved placemaking, housing standards and culture. For example, as set out in NP11's [Place Strategy](#). We need to develop and maintain the North as an attractive place to live, study, visit, invest and work in.

Our Policy Propositions (full papers to be made available separately)

<i>Powering Britain's Future</i>	<i>Including all our people in</i>	<i>Connecting the North</i>
<i>Economy</i>	<i>growth</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced Manufacturing and Digital • Life Sciences • Clean Energy and Net Zero 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and Good Jobs • Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport • Trade and Investment

Following the Convention, this will be turned into a prioritised programme of collaborative to be taken forward over the next year, in the run up to the next Convention in West Yorkshire.

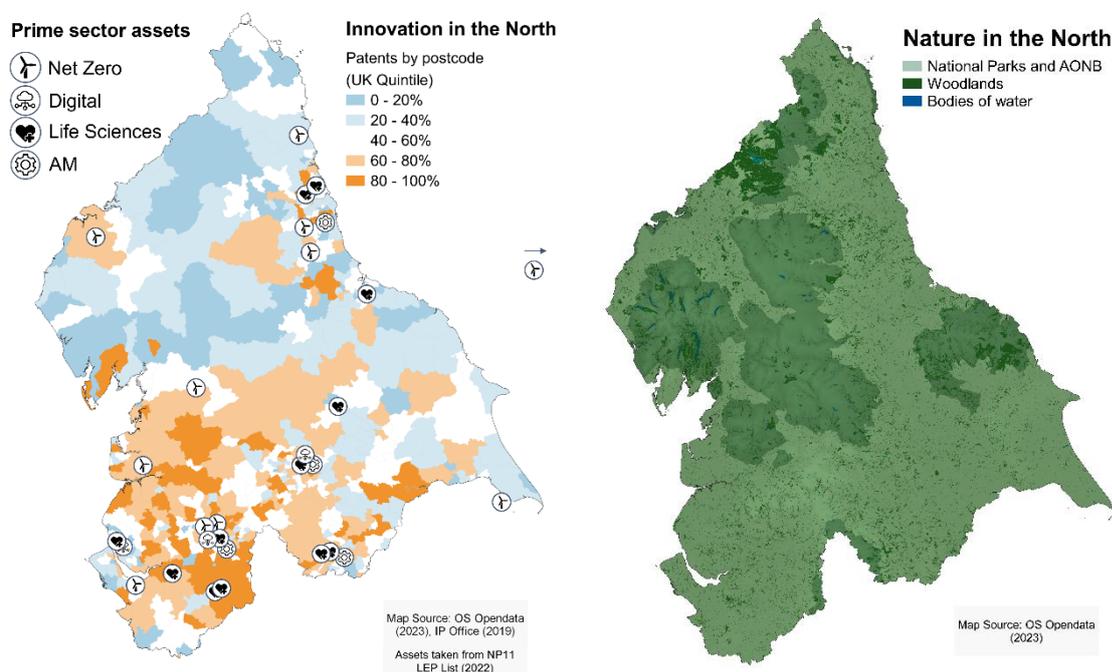


Mapping the North

1.1 Powering Britain's Future Economy – Assets and Capabilities

As first identified in the 2016 [Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review](#), the North has four Prime Capabilities: Advanced Manufacturing, Digital, Energy and Health Innovation. These capabilities are distinctive at a pan-Northern scale, have high productivity and are internationally competitive. They are also well aligned with R&D investment and supporting the UK's goal of investing 2.4% of GDP.

The North has significant economic and natural assets and concentrations of R&D



However, public R&D spending in the UK is highly regionally unbalanced. £1.6bn annual investment [would be needed](#) to bring the North up to the R&D intensity of the Greater South East. Given funding parity, the North can deliver a win-win for the entire UK, strengthening the frontier sectors of the economy while delivering higher returns.

Supporting our economic potential, the North's environment represents a major asset to power our economic future whilst generating huge social and cultural benefits for residents and visitors. In a [recent report by NP11](#), it was estimated that investing in urban green spaces would deliver a benefit-cost ratio of 4:1. The North's cultural and heritage assets (which include 345 museums, and 7 world heritage sites) also represent a major strength for the region.

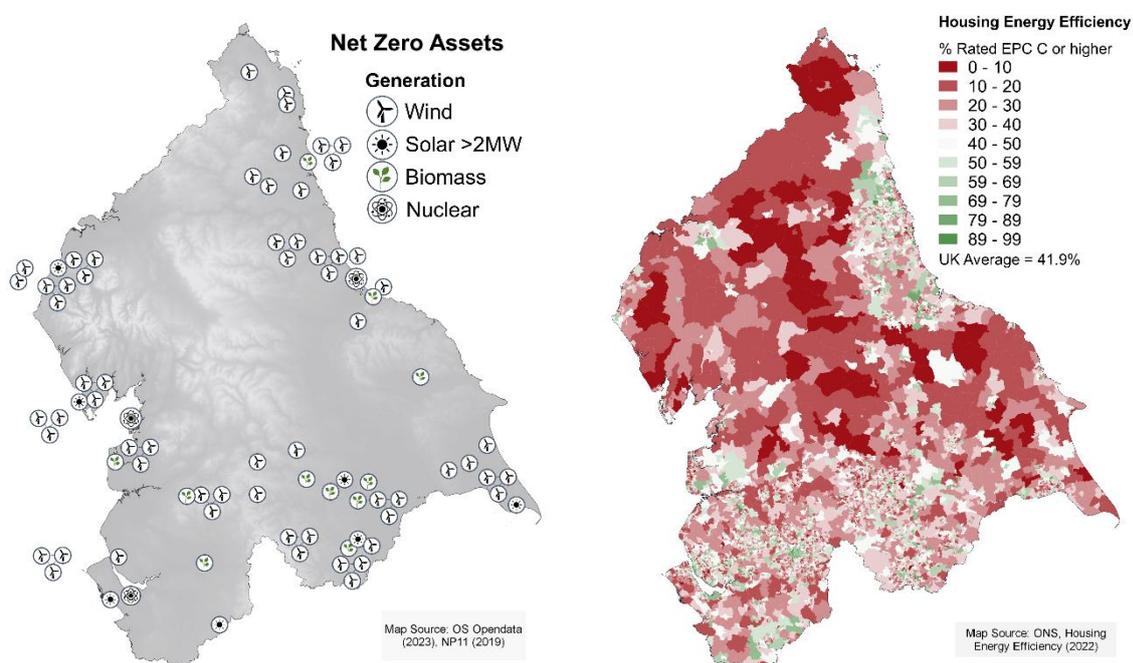
The assets and capabilities in the North are significant. This often-untapped potential can drive Britain's future economy.

1.2 Powering Britain's Future Economy – Net Zero

As set out above, the North's natural assets provide a platform for boosting our economy and powering the transition to a lower carbon economy. As the birthplace of the first Industrial Revolution, the North can forge the Fourth one - a Green Industrial Revolution.

Renewable power is an area where the North can provide the UK with the clean and affordable energy it needs, while contributing to an area of genuine international comparative advantage. There are significant clusters of Net Zero assets across the breadth of the North from wind to nuclear and emerging proposals to utilise carbon capture and storage, small modular reactors and tidal barrages amongst other innovative technologies

The North's natural and energy assets are unique and nationally significant



Currently, the North's existing housing stock is our biggest single source of carbon emissions and contributes to poor health outcomes (further detail on housing can be found also in the section below). The need for retrofit provides an economic opportunity that will also reduce our carbon emissions, generate financial savings for households and lead to better health outcomes. With the high cost of energy, this issue has never been more important.

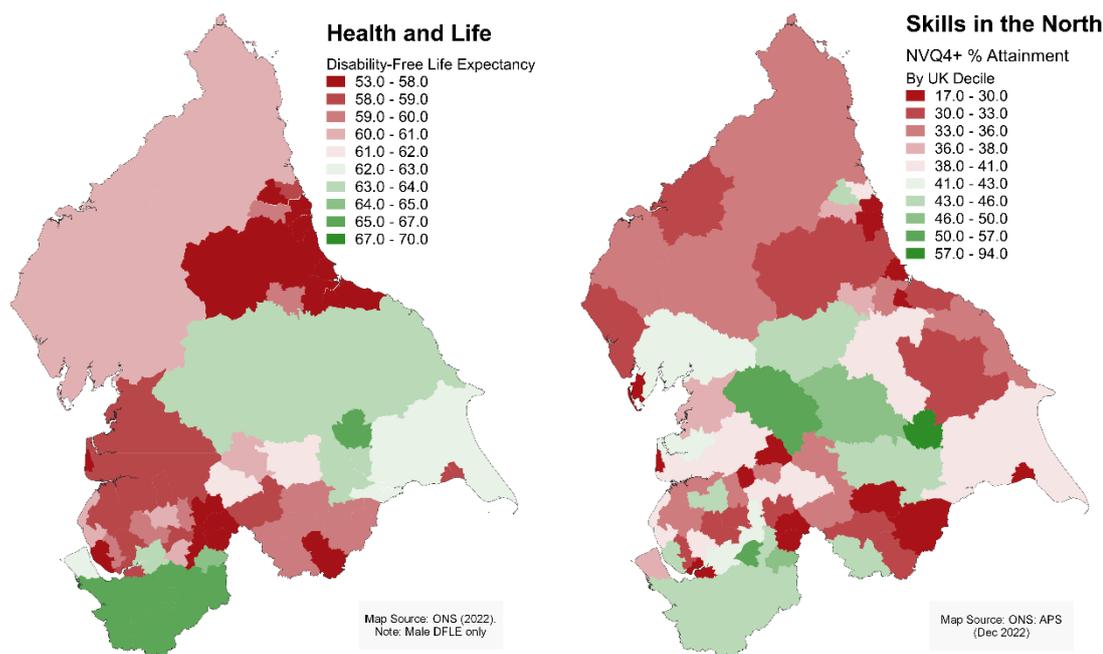
Net Zero provides a set of challenges and opportunities for the North given our ideal mix of skills, sectors and assets. A just transition is an opportunity over the next quarter of a century to benefit our people, the environment and the economy.

2.1 Including all our people in Growth – Health and Skills

A strong and inclusive economy is critical to supporting people to be healthy; while a healthy population is a critical part of a productive economy. Talent is spread equally across the UK but opportunities often are not.

The Covid-19 pandemic shone a light on the [links between health and economic productivity](#), with the most deprived neighbourhoods and regions hit hardest by the pandemic, and worse outcomes in the North.

Too many working-age Northern adults are living with life-limiting illnesses



This represents both a challenge and an opportunity for the North. The [NHS estimates](#) that increasing the proportion of people in good health in the North by 3.5% would reduce the employment gap between the North and the rest of England by 10%. Meanwhile, the Resolution Foundation has [argued](#) that addressing regional inequalities in human capital development is essential for boosting national competitiveness.

Seizing the economic opportunities of tomorrow requires the North to increase the level of skills in the workforce. A more skilled workforce will increase opportunities for individuals, increase incomes and productivity. Through devolution, many parts of the North are taking on new responsibilities for improving skills. At both a local and pan-Northern level, the opportunity from wider and deeper devolution in this area can help to unlock our potential.

With the link between good health, skills and economic productivity firmly established, investment in the North's people and businesses (in particular, leading sectors like life sciences, which has the [potential](#) to double the sector's employment footprint by 2040) has the potential to offer high levels of returns and boost growth.

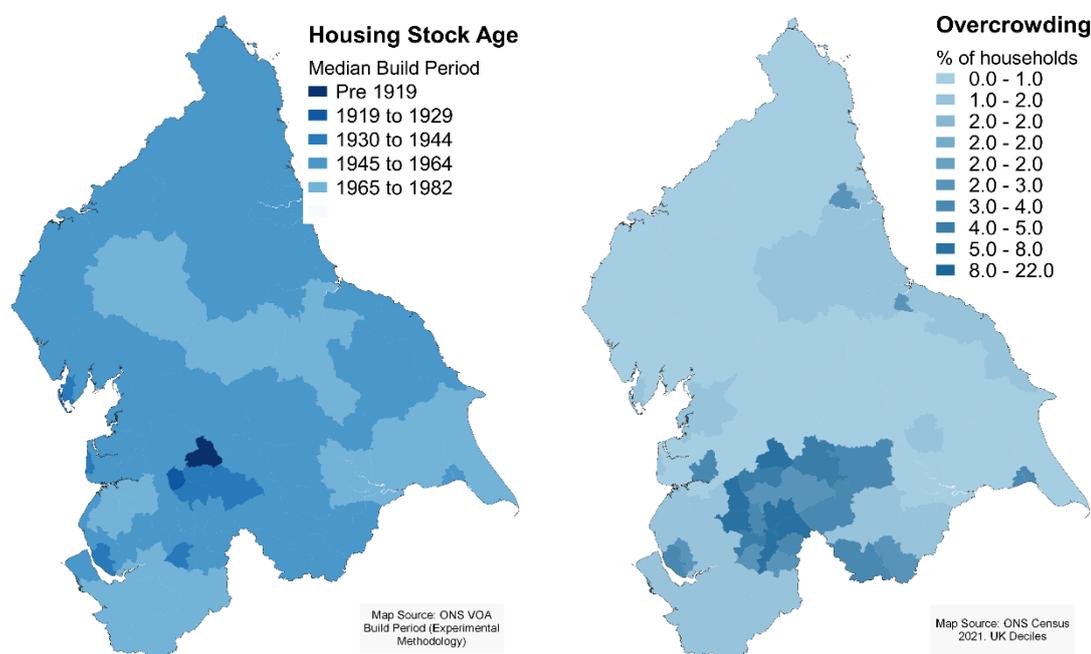
2.2 Including all our people in Growth - Housing

A shared challenge across the North is the energy efficiency and quality of our housing stock. While the North's relative housing affordability is an asset, housing quality is a major determinant of health outcomes, wellbeing and wider economic success.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, [overcrowded houses](#) exacerbated the uneven [impact of the pandemic in the North](#). Overcrowding also leads to other health issues and reduces the wellbeing of our residents.

Poorly insulated houses are vulnerable to mould, damp and respiratory illness. As set out above, this housing challenge is also inter-connected with health outcomes and the need to transition to net zero.

Much of the North's housing stock is old, inefficient and overcrowded



The North's housing stock is generally old, and more so than the UK as a whole; much was built during the Victorian era. Some areas face a greater challenge from overcrowding, energy efficiency and age than others, but the need for change is common to all parts of the North.

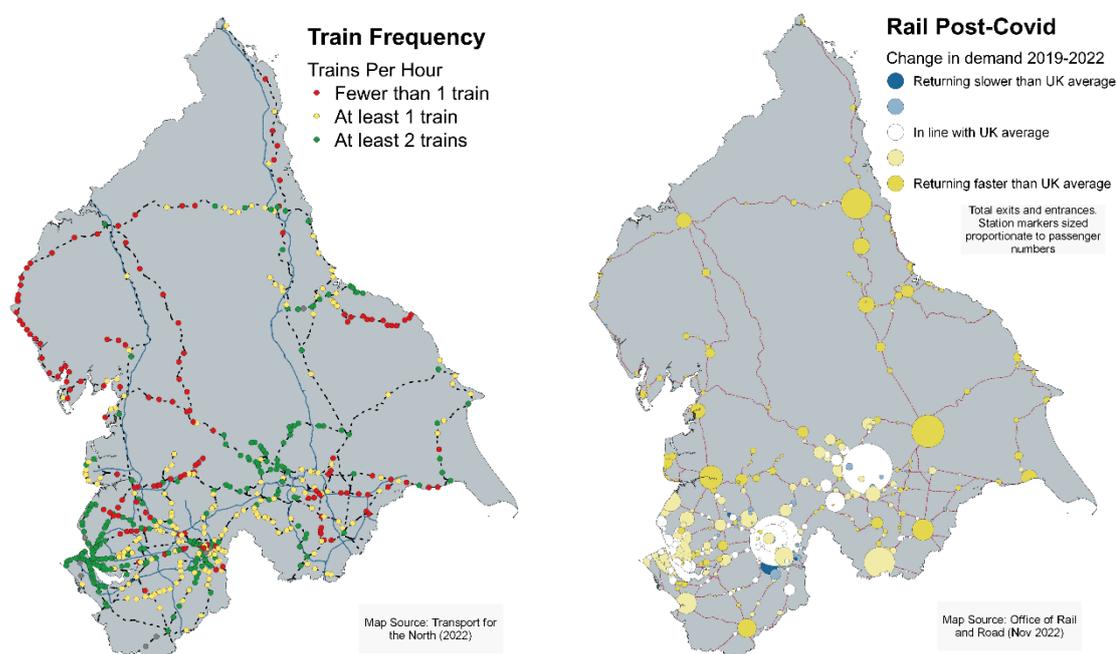
Improving the North's housing through the delivery of sustainable homes and retrofitting existing homes will deliver economic, health and wellbeing returns, while shoring up the energy independence of the UK.

3.1 Connecting the North – Transport

The agglomeration potential of the North is significant. By better connecting people, and labour markets we can drive improvements in productivity and inclusive growth. That is the investment case on which Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) is based, and why improving transport has been central to devolution.

But the North is held back by service failure on our railways, cuts to bus services and a multi-generational failure to keep infrastructure up to the standards needed for growth. This results in slow and unreliable journeys and limited capacity to cope with demand, as the map of train frequency below highlights.

The North has high transport demand, but is held back by our services



Road, rail and metro links continue to be essential for the North's economy. The 2021 Census suggests that 26% of the North's workers work mainly from home, compared to 31% across the UK.

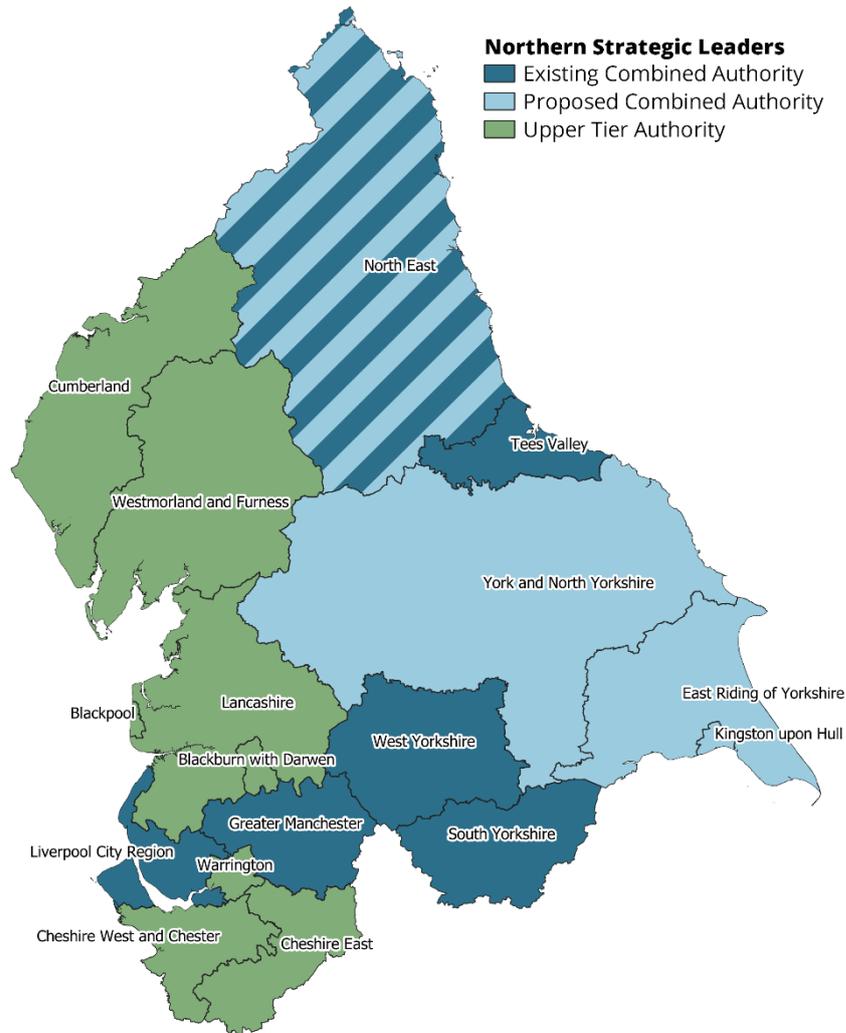
The North has demonstrated sustained long-term growth in rail demand over the last 30 years, with total rail travel volume in the North bouncing back faster than the rest of the country post-Covid as the map above shows.

If the North's infrastructure and services challenges are resolved, there is major potential to grow and unlock the transformative potential of its prime capabilities.

3.2 Connecting the North – Our Collective Capacity to Deliver

Devolution coverage has continued to increase across the North. Recent deals include those in York and North Yorkshire and the North East. These deals will mean that 74% of the North's population will live in a Mayoral Combined Authority area.

The North has a unique capacity to deliver change at depth and scale



This consolidated strategic landscape gives the North a unique capacity to deliver change; the establishment of Combined Authorities and local government reorganisation in places like Cumbria strengthens the North's strategic delivery capacity, with local government working alongside pan-Northern partnerships across business and other sectors.

Our Propositions for powering Britain's future

The stark analysis set out in 'Mapping the North' will require bold and imaginative solutions across inter-connected policies, places and sectors. The Convention will discuss policy proposition papers laying out the challenges and opportunities that can catalyse the North to achieve its potential. These papers have been developed by groups from local government, businesses and think tanks across the North. Each paper sets out what is unique to the North about this policy area and where the investment opportunities lie.

Building on the NP11's Place Strategy, the Convention will also discuss propositions on nature, heritage, culture and the visitor economy, as well as housing. **Housing investment is needed to create an affordable and healthy North, aligned to an approach to placemaking, the natural environment, and cultural investment that makes this a vibrant place to live.** Through a high quality built and natural environment, this we can secure a North that is attractive to residents and visitors alike.

The papers set out the following potential propositions, to be discussed in workshops at the Convention and taken forward as set out in the 'Building the North's Future' section below.

Advanced Manufacturing and Digital

- An Accelerated digital transformation programmes for advanced manufacturing – building on Made Smarter through increased funding at the next Spending Review.
- A Northern plan to tackle the digital skills gap – using devolution to inspire the next generation, upskill existing workforces and raise the profile of career opportunities.
- A Northern tech hub network to deliver support services for the digital sector – strengthening existing networks to help businesses with skills and access to finance.

Clean Energy and Net Zero

- Transforming the supply side in globally significant emerging technologies – collaboration and funding for North to lead on hydrogen, small modular reactors, tidal and wind amongst other sectors.
- Supporting demand side engagement – reducing energy demand through investment, planning, nature-based solutions and behaviour change.
- Promoting Green Skills - skills mapping and career routes to develop new sectors.

Health

- Locally tailored approaches to supporting employment through health – developing health and employment integration plans based around need.
- Invest in networks of expanded family hubs - delivering locally-tailored provision including high-quality childcare, targeted at areas of highest need .
- Transformation funds for health services – investing locally led to reduce health inequalities and improve population health.

Life Sciences

- A Northern supercluster in health and life sciences – investing in system integration, outreach for inward investment and projects in leading sub-sectors.
- Increase capacity and scale for pan-Northern collaboration, partnerships and investment – helping to create UK-wide collaboration across NHS, private sector and academia.



- Address barriers to business innovation and growth in the Northern life sciences supercluster – improving visibility, skills pipelines and access to finance.

People and Good Jobs

- Driving good employment across the North – using Good Employment Charters and anchor institutions to promote good employment.
- Growing a pipeline that matches supply of and demand for skills – underpinning with accessible provision that is responsive to employer needs, enabled by skills devolution.
- Attracting and retaining talent – strengthening partnerships across the North and working with culture, heritage, and nature agencies to improve quality of place.

Trade and Investment

- Developing and promoting a competitive ‘Northern product’ and improving the overseas investment pipeline – working with government to develop compelling propositions.
- Embed trade and investment funding and resources in the North – ensuring locally dedicated resource and account management.
- Formalise the relationship between the North, DIT and Office for Investment and develop a shared outcomes framework – building on local and national priorities.

Transport

- Deliver Northern Powerhouse Rail in full – delivering the original vision for rail infrastructure that that will connect the North’s 15m people, achieving significant agglomeration effects, boosting productivity and generating inclusive growth.
- Devolution delivering high performing Bus and Rail Services – supporting services with funding and clearer lines of accountability over the operation of our transport system.
- Inclusive transport decarbonisation – addressing transport-related social exclusion through modal shifts and delivered through devolved powers.



Building the North's Future

The Convention of the North 2023 is the next step in deepening collaboration across the North of England and powering Britain's future. It builds on close to a decade of deepening capacity, co-operation and strategic coherence across the North.

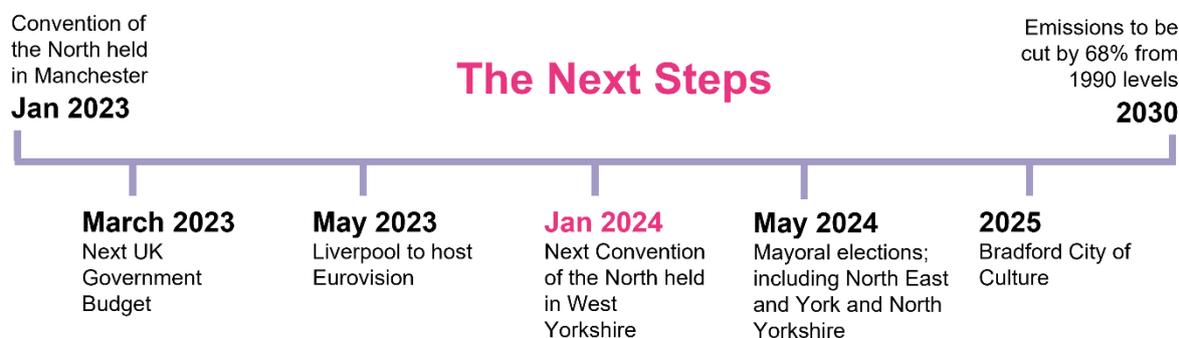


The North is already working together on a daily basis – sharing solutions and insights that benefit people across the region. Building on this, the priorities identified at the Convention in Manchester will be taken forward in a work programme over the next year. Some of these priorities will require pan-Northern collaboration, whilst others will be more place based.

The Convention of the North Steering Group (comprised of Council Leaders and Mayors representing all parts of the North and all three main political parties, and co-chaired by the Chair of the NP11 group of Northern LEPs) will work together with partners across the North as well as central government to develop our programme of Northern collaboration.

An updated Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review will be published in 2023, with updated analysis on the transformation needed in terms of productivity, investment, inclusivity and supply across the North. A new Northern Evidence Network is also being established to provide further analysis on the opportunities and challenges of the North.

The 2024 Convention will bring together the North to assess progress on our shared priorities and to continue to develop our ambition to power Britain's future.



The Convention of the North

The NP11 is the business-led voice for the North that brings together the 11 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) from across the North of England. Its members include:

Sir Roger Marsh OBE DL

Chair of NP11

Lou Cordwell OBE

Chair of the Greater Manchester LEP

Debbie Francis OBE

Chair of Lancashire LEP

Asif Hamid MBE

Chair of Liverpool City Region LEP

Clare Hayward MBE DL

Chair of Cheshire & Warrington LEP

Lord Richard Inglewood DL

Chair of Cumbria LEP

Siobhan McArdle

Chair of Tees Valley LEP

James Newman OBE

Chair of Hull & East Yorkshire LEP

Lucy Nickson

Interim Chair of Sheffield City Region LEP

Mark Roberts

Interim Chair of Leeds City Region LEP

Helen Simpson OBE

Chair of York & North Yorkshire LEP

Lucy Winskell OBE

Chair of the North East LEP

The Convention of the North brings together people from across the North, including businesses, trade unions, elected leaders, and community and faith groups, to speak with one voice on pan-Northern issues. Its steering group includes:

Bev Craig

Leader of Manchester City Council

Joanne Anderson

Mayor of Liverpool

Keith Aspden

Leader of York City Council

Tracey Brabin

West Yorkshire Mayor

Andy Burnham

Greater Manchester Mayor

Oliver Coppard

South Yorkshire Mayor

Jamie Driscoll

North of Tyne Mayor

Terry Fox

Leader of Sheffield City Council

Susan Hinchcliffe

Leader of Bradford Council

Amanda Hopgood

Leader of Durham County Council

Ben Houchen

Tees Valley Mayor

Stephen Houghton

Leader of Barnsley Council

Nick Kemp

Leader of Newcastle City Council

Carl Les

Leader of North Yorkshire County Council

James Lewis

Leader of Leeds City Council

John Merry

Deputy Mayor of Salford City Council

Steve Rotheram

Liverpool City Region Mayor

Philippa Williamson

Leader of Lancashire County Council

Henri Murison

Director of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership

This paper has been produced by the Convention of the North and NP11, with support from Metro Dynamics. It was informed via an extensive consultation process with: Convention of the North steering group members; NP11 Chair, Chief Executives and officers, and others.