

# WIRRAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Refreshed for 2015 - 2020

# WIRRAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2015 - 2020

## Introduction

Wirral is putting in place the economic environment that companies want to see: a commitment to building a commercial case for sustainable economic growth, through a portfolio approach that demonstrates long term commitment and planning, confidence and ambition.

Wirral's relationships locally, in the wider City Region, in the UK and in the global marketplace are stronger than ever before. In this light, we have been taking a wider view of our performance and our potential.

Since Wirral's first Investment Strategy was published in 2007, we have faced challenging market conditions. But today, our borough is rightly anticipating a stronger and more certain future. Unlike 2011, when this document was last revised, our investors, as well as our stakeholders –the people who live, work and provide jobs in the borough – face a period of growth and development.

This makes this new updated Investment Strategy at once essential, timely, and, most importantly, a strong and stable platform for growing the borough's economy for years to come.

## Introduction: about this document

This document sets out Wirral's current economic growth programme. We present the exciting changes taking place on the Wirral and the future plans which will transform this part of the UK.

The document also outlines the key projects and emergent opportunities that will prove attractive to investors from the private sector. The public sector is committed to support this activity and ensure the people in Wirral can share and fully take part in this renewal. The project pipeline, set out in the pages which follow, provides the catalyst to allow Wirral to realise economic growth and prosperity for its future.

This document will show how we plan to take advantage of our key strengths:

- A sector profile that shows ambition and focus alongside strength in depth;
- A workforce with the skills and experience to deliver;
- A strong partnership with Wirral Chamber of Commerce;
- Infrastructure that is more connected, more modern and more cohesive than ever before; and
- A council committed to driving the growth of Wirral's economy, increasing aspiration and supporting residents to access employment and skills.

In this document, we are promoting investment opportunities that are timely. We feel they are targeted, deliverable and, with the right support, financially viable.

# WIRRAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2015 - 2020

## Presenting our key strengths

### Our local economy

Wirral sits within the heart of the Liverpool City Region (LCR) : a region which is shrugging off recession to record an annual growth rate of 4.3% since 1997.

Wirral has played a full role in that performance:

- Wirral has the lowest rate of Job Seekers Allowance claimants in the Liverpool City Region;
- Wirral has contributed 33% of the overall total increase in the number of enterprises across Merseyside since 2011;
- Wirral's GVA per head increased by 7% between 2012 and 2013 which is the second highest increase in England, and
- Wirral's GVA totalled £3.9bn in 2013 – representing 15% of the total Liverpool City Region economic value.

Much work still needs to be done. We are working closely with the other local councils within the City Region through the LCR Combined Authority and with partners through the LCR Local Enterprise Partnership with one of the aims being to gain more powers and funding from Government to attract more investment and jobs.

Ensuring this Investment Strategy is delivered on time will support this aim and also result in the following benefits being realised:

- Economic growth will be linked to supporting local people into employment;
- Apprenticeships as a route to employment and business growth will receive stronger recognition among employers and employees;
- Businesses will flourish generating even more employment opportunities for residents; and
- Wirral will become a preferred destination for employers, investors and an increasingly highly skilled workforce

### Our skills base

Inward investors have shown an appreciation for our pool of skilled labour at all levels: the demonstrable productivity and competitive labour costs, not to mention unparalleled access to further and higher education institutions committed to vocational and professional excellence in their training and educational programmes.

We have a large economically active population of over 145,000, an increase of over 4% between 2010 and 2013. Wirral is within an hour's journey of 12 universities and a replenishing supply of graduates. Businesses already located in Wirral are reaping the advantages this skilled labour pool brings. Unilever, for example, has created a number of strategic local partnerships, to build global commerce on local foundations.

Our next challenge is to ensure the benefits and opportunities which will flow from the changes presented in this document are open to all. To do this, some of our key investment proposals are:

## WIRRAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2015 - 2020

- A new College Campus for Wirral Metropolitan College ('Wirral Met'), which sits right at the heart of the Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone.
- Delivering on the Skills for Growth Agreements- including the opportunities via the SuperPort.
- The development of a Maritime Knowledge and Industries hub with local universities and college

### Our enterprise zone

Wirral Waters is a private sector development by Peel Holdings that has Enterprise designation from Government and is a preferred site for inward investment in the Liverpool City Region. At 18 million sq. ft, the Wirral Waters initiative is nothing less than *the largest regeneration scheme in the UK*. This mixed-use waterfront development represents a £4.5 billion investment in the Birkenhead Docks area of the borough – the East Float element of the scheme was granted planning permission in 2010 and includes mixed use development with residential, office and education facilities. The West Float area of the scheme reflects its industrial heritage with developments including the International Trade Centre and Advanced Manufacturing Supplier Park

Set to deliver in excess of 20,000 permanent jobs, this major development will play a crucial role in driving economic growth in the region, as well as providing a wealth of opportunities for potential investors and businesses keen to locate in the area.<sup>1</sup>

Initiatives include:

- A dedicated Built Environment, Skills and Enterprise Campus for Wirral Metropolitan College
- A £12m, 50,000 sq ft office development at Tower Wharf
- A proposed £42m investment in a 17,200 sq m building serving the civil nuclear sector granted planning permission in 2015
- Proposals for a Maritime Industries hub
- The creation of an offshore survival training facility.

### Our commitment to residents

We constantly strive to ensure all of our residents are able to benefit from the regeneration and investment taking place in Wirral. We have led from the front in this regard. The successful Wirral Apprentice programme was launched in September 2009 and has since helped over 500 young people begin their careers with apprenticeships in hundreds of Wirral companies.

Our partnership activity within the Liverpool City Region is illustrated by our involvement in the City Employment and Skills Board. This initiative recognises that combining resources and pooling knowledge is the best way of testing and implementing new ways of supporting unemployed residents into the labour market and ensuring that the city region's skills base reflects the future needs of employers.

But social inclusion is not just about access to the labour market – the Investment Strategy a joint statement of intent of partners from across Wirral to deliver public service

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<sup>1</sup> Peel (2014): 'Wirral Waters'

## WIRRAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2015 - 2020

transformation across the Borough based on the clear principle of finding local solutions to local problems.

Initiatives include:

- Multi-agency support interventions for the unemployed via the *Wirral Worklessness Support* programme.
- Enabling young people to access employment by providing innovative and focused support through the Youth Employment Gateway programme
- Developing new ways of addressing the high levels of health related worklessness that are experienced in Wirral by working with a range of agencies, responding to residents needs and delivering a bespoke package of support back into work.

### Our reliable transport infrastructure

With two-thirds of the UK's population within just a two hour drive, businesses in Wirral have unrivalled labour market opportunities.<sup>2</sup> The M53 runs the length of the Wirral peninsula. Our existing multinational companies and their supply chains benefit from this ease of access to the UK motorway network.

Rail links are also strong. We are well placed to take advantage of a journey time just over two hours from Liverpool Lime Street to London Euston. We also have direct rail services to both Manchester and Birmingham. Access to the UK's other major cities is no barrier either. In the longer term the HS2 rail project will not only benefit passengers but also freight transport across the region – offering wider global opportunities.

Last, but by no means least, we are on the doorstep of Liverpool John Lennon and Manchester International Airports, key European and Global hubs securing the reputation of Wirral as an ideal location in which to do business both home and abroad.

Key transport and accessibility initiatives include:

- New and improved infrastructure to our key economic opportunities
- Enhancement to the Bidston to Wrexham line.
- The creation and restoration of facilities for public transport, walking and cycling.

The strength of Wirral's transport offer is enhanced through our location within a unique SuperPort region, created through the combination of the Port of Liverpool, Liverpool John Lennon Airport and the Manchester Ship Canal.

The SuperPort initiative is the transformation of the City Region's ports, airport, road, rail and logistics assets into a low carbon SuperPort of international stature. A key part of this is the Liverpool 2 deep water container terminal which will enable larger vessels to be brought closer to the UK's industrial and manufacturing centres than any other UK port. Up to 20,000 new jobs across the City Region are expected to be created by SuperPort, and Wirral sits at the centre of this unique SuperPort region. We are seeking to maximise the opportunities SuperPort offers:

- Large scale waterfront regeneration at Wirral Waters.

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<sup>2</sup> Invest Wirral (2014): 'Road Links'

## WIRRAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2015 - 2020

- Port Wirral - A new and improved port facility at the entrance to the Manchester Ship Canal.
- Re-instatement of the freight line to allow ease of movement to/from West Float in Wirral Docks.
- Creation of a 2.5m ft<sup>2</sup> International Trade Centre and advanced manufacturing supplier park at West Float.
- Continued support to strengthen our outstanding logistics and supply chain offer at key locations such as the International Business Park.

### Our target growth sectors

We are supporting growth across the economy and facilitating the opportunities for business to thrive whatever their size and sector. We have three sector-focused ambitions, which are discussed below:

- An automotive supplier park for the UK.
- Offshore and advanced energy.
- The heart of research and development

### An automotive sector for the UK

The UK automotive industry is booming. UK Car production rose 3.1% in 2013, surpassing 1.5m units, the highest volume since 2007, with predictions for more growth, especially in export markets such as China.<sup>3</sup> Wirral is at the heart of that growth, with over 95% of the UK's car production coming from within a three hour drive of the borough.

Only one third of the parts that go into vehicles manufactured in the UK are sourced from the UK.<sup>4</sup> We are determined to put this right. We are proud of our automotive manufacturing history and improving the UK's automotive supply chain is something that we have committed to.

Key initiatives include:

- The development and marketing of the Advanced Supplier Park on Wirral Waters: the Park is situated on a 35 acre site, with planning permission for 232,000 sq. m of floor space. Initial predictions show that the development could result in the creation of 1,000 new jobs.
- Involvement and partnership with the Automotive Investment Organisation (AIO), set-up by the Government as a key part of their automotive strategy, to help support potential investors.

### Offshore and advanced energy

Since 2010 the amount of electricity generated from renewable energy has more than doubled, with a record share of electricity generated being recorded at almost 18% by the end of 2013.

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<sup>3</sup> SMMT (2014): 'Car Manufacturing 2013'

<sup>4</sup> HM Government (2013): 'Driving success- a strategy for growth and sustainability in the UK automotive sector'

## WIRRAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2015 - 2020

At £218bn, the energy sector has the largest pipeline of infrastructure investment projects in the UK, and in 2013 the annual Government investment in renewables hit a record high of almost £8bn.<sup>5</sup>

Wirral is one of a handful of areas designated as a Centre for Offshore Renewable Engineering (CORE). We are the only CORE area on the UK's west coast, and we are committed to support growth in this sector.

CORE status is recognition of the outstanding land, infrastructure, skills and supply chain expertise we have in this sector and we are doing everything to ensure our offshore wind industry continues to attract investment and deliver sustainable returns, through foreign direct investment, as well as aiding the expansion of UK businesses into the global market.<sup>6</sup> Our unique offer includes:

- Close proximity to the Irish Sea and Round 3 Wind Farms.
- The SuperPort initiative and Liverpool 2.
- The iconic Cammell Laird brand, the west coast's largest heavy fabrication, marine engineering and maintenance base port facility is situated in Birkenhead Docks.
- The region supports a large supply chain relevant to the sector.<sup>7</sup>

Our commitment to this sector is exemplified by our Offshore Wind Investment Programme. The programme, which was awarded £5m from the RGF, is set to attract £25 million from private investments and is predicted to result in an additional 543 jobs.

Key initiatives include:

- Enhanced facilities at Cammell Laird.
- Creation of two new Business Parks to develop the industry supply chain locally.
- Targeted financial assistance to businesses, reducing entry barriers and increasing private investment in the industry's supply chain.

### The heart of research and development

Scientific research and development is one of the UK's leading growth sectors for job creation<sup>8</sup>, and improving the UK's innovation performance has been identified as a key component of the Government's growth plan.<sup>9</sup>

Port Sunlight, the centre for Unilever's Home Care and Personal Care R&D, is the site of the global innovation and development centres for hair and laundry. A multi-national workforce of over 750 scientists is employed at the site, with approximately 200 members of staff holding PhDs.<sup>10</sup>

Innovation drives the development of the Unilever brand, and a recent allocation of round five RGF will help the organisation grow its product design capabilities with the assistance of its strategic local partners.<sup>11</sup> Unilever has recently committed to expanding the site and increasing its role within the global group.

<sup>5</sup> DECC (2014): 'Energy Investment Report, April 2014'

<sup>6</sup> HM Government (2012): 'Building Offshore Wind in England'

<sup>7</sup> HM Government (2012): 'Building Offshore Wind in England'

<sup>8</sup> HM Treasury (2014): '£67 million to support UK's world leading science sector'

<sup>9</sup> BIS (2011): 'Innovation and Research Strategy for Growth'

<sup>10</sup> Unilever (2014): 'Port Sunlight UK'

<sup>11</sup> Wirral Chamber of Commerce (2014): 'Unilever benefits from Regional Growth Fund for Port Sunlight Expansion'

## WIRRAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2015 - 2020

Bristol-Myers Squibb's Research Institute in Moreton focuses on supporting clinical trials for newly discovered medicines, as well as working to enhance the use of established medicines. Benefiting from over £3m of investment over the last few years, the site has seen refurbishment of the pharmaceuticals, clinical supply packaging and analytical laboratory areas. Activity at the site is continuing to grow, with Bristol-Myers Squibb securing a £4.5m investment from its US parent company to expand its research and clinical trial work.

Being the chosen location for the research and development activities of two major global organisations, which are continuing to expand in this area, Wirral is perfectly placed to support other businesses gain market share, benefit from knowledge transfer and assist in supply chain development.

Key Initiatives include:

- Partnership with Unilever working to extend Port Sunlight and open a Research and Development park.
- Developing a new knowledge hub for advanced engineering and maritime
- Taking a lead role in establishing the feasibility of a digital enterprise network for the City Region.

### Our investment support offer - finance

Our aim is to support local businesses and entrepreneurs to share in these opportunities. To that end we are delivering, in partnership with the Local Enterprise Partnership, Wirral's Business Growth Grant.<sup>12</sup> Companies based in Wirral who want to invest, can apply for a share of the £15 million to develop growth projects and to create new and permanent jobs.

The grant can help businesses to invest in what they need for growth: capital investment in the form of land and buildings; investment in plant, machinery and equipment; investment in new technology; and research and development where this will directly support business and job growth.

Working with Wirral Chamber of Commerce we aim to enable companies access support that is right for them – this includes access to specialist consultants through Business Support programmes and to advice on innovation through the New Markets programme.

Wirral Borough Council is also part of Merseyside Connected. This scheme has received funding from BT, the European Regional Development Fund and the Government's Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) fund. The scheme aims to improve access to high speed broadband networks to homes and business in the area. The scheme also offers advice and support to eligible, high growth potential businesses to help them grow and create employment, taking advantage of the opportunity offered by super-fast broadband.

### Our investment support offer – expertise

Businesses choosing to locate in Wirral benefit from our dedicated Business Team, Invest Wirral who work in collaboration with Wirral Chamber of Commerce to provide a co-ordinated and seamless service to business. The team and the Chamber work alongside the national inward investment service, UKTI, to provide access to a full range of business support services. The Chamber will also make sure businesses are best placed to take

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<sup>12</sup> Funded through the Regional Growth Fund (RGF)

## WIRRAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2015 - 2020

advantage of our Enterprise Zone status and the benefits that will bring to our local economy.

These are real, deliverable opportunities, illustrated by the preparatory investment to date and our focus on three major target growth areas – the automotive industry, offshore & advanced energy, and research & development. With a well-integrated transport and logistic system, and access to graduates from the UK's top universities, Wirral is well placed to support delivery of the Government's economic growth plans.