



Innovate
UK

**WEST OF
ENGLAND**
Combined Authority



Innovate UK

West of England

Local Action Plan

February 2024



Contents

Forewords	4
Executive Summary	8
Principles and Core Areas	9
National Innovation	10
The View from the West of England	12
Today's Outlook	18
Innovate UK in the West of England	30
Delivering our Plan for the West of England	34
Core Areas and Actions	34
Strategic Partnerships	36
Innovation Support	38
Communication and Engagement	40
Monitoring, Delivery and Outcomes	42



Foreword by Indro Mukerjee



Innovate UK is the UK's innovation agency. We work to drive productivity and economic growth by supporting businesses to develop and realise the potential of new ideas.

Innovation is at the heart of our future economy. It creates opportunities for businesses, enables high quality jobs, and drives prosperity. Innovation is key

to protecting our planet and environment, improving healthy living for our societies, and accelerating the technologies of the future. These benefits are global and national, and of vital importance to the places where we live.

Place and levelling up is a key strategic priority for Innovate UK and our Plan for Action outlines our commitment to work with leaders across the UK to develop innovation strategies that recognise the strengths and opportunities in their regions and nations.

As an important milestone and an example of this work, I am pleased to launch this West of England Action Plan, which we have co-created with the West of England Combined Authority. The West of England is rich in cultural history, creativity and modern ingenuity and is home to nationally and internationally significant



innovation capabilities. By working with innovation-led stakeholders and local talent, we seek to accelerate the application and commercialisation of that knowledge by investing in impactful ideas that will drive sustainable growth and increase productivity.

This Action Plan acts as a blueprint for how we will work together to build an even more successful regional economy with improved skills and opportunities to support the already thriving innovation ecosystem. The Innovate UK team is ready to commit to working with partners across the UK nations and regions, across the research and innovation ecosystem and across government to drive Place based impact.

Indro Mukerjee
Innovate UK CEO

Foreword by Dan Norris



For as long as we have existed, people from the West of England have been innovating. Think Brunel, who literally ‘built the world’, and Herschel, who expanded the known limits of our solar system. Think Sarah Guppy, the first woman to patent a bridge, defying the expectations of a male-dominated engineering environment in the process. Or how about Concorde, built and

maintained in Filton, or the world’s first commercially produced chocolate bar, and hollow Easter egg? The West of England has always been - and continues to be - at the forefront of innovation here at home, but also globally. That’s something to be really proud of.

The Mayoral Combined Authority has invested over £50 million in innovation projects in the region, supporting areas from alternative propulsion to quantum. But, as Metro Mayor, I’m determined we don’t just dine out on our past, but instead focus on continuing to build the West’s innovation credentials, and so look to the future with confidence. It’s why I’ve made innovation a key priority for the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority I’m so proud to lead.

I’m proud of everything we’ve achieved so far. In fact, I think we have a lot to shout about in our part of the world.



We have four brilliant universities spearheading cutting-edge research into new materials and technologies, a nationally recognised tech and innovation cluster, developing and commercialising new products - made in the West of England and sold worldwide - and talent in abundance.

We have the UK's largest space cluster outside the South East harnessing the endless possibilities of space to boost our communities, and globally significant research centres like IAAPS, housed in its Mayoral Combined Authority-funded building, working to revolutionise polluting industries. And, last but not least, we're about to host Europe's largest supercomputer - named after Brunel himself.

All of this is down to our number one asset - our residents. Creative, dynamic people and teams who are doing amazing things, including working towards tackling some

huge regional, and global, challenges - including when it comes to taking the steps necessary for the West to slash our emissions at pace and supporting nature's recovery, two key priorities for my Mayoral Combined Authority.

But I know we can go even further. That's why I'm so proud to team up with Innovate UK to present this new Action Plan to realise the full potential of the Mayoral Combined Authority's **Plan for Innovation** ambitions. Working with them, plus our amazing employers, colleges, training providers, universities, and other partners, we will take advantage of our strengths - and potential - to make this great region an innovation engine, and keep our amazing West of England flourishing, and leading.

Dan Norris
Metro Mayor for the West of England

Executive Summary



Innovation helps businesses adapt to change and creates new business opportunities. Innovative companies are providing new solutions for our changing climate and support living longer lives. Vibrant local business clusters attract investment and talented workers, with strong supply chains that influence the location of global corporations.

Working together in local supply chains to do things differently improves productivity and enriches local economies, leading to further investment in the skills of local people, quality jobs, and further opportunities.

Through its mission to grow, develop and commercialise products, services and processes that support innovation

ecosystems that are agile and inclusive, Innovate UK is delivering against the Government's vision for the UK to be a global hub for innovation by 2035.

This West of England Local Action Plan highlights areas of strength and positive trends in the local economy on which Innovate UK and the West of England Combined Authority intend to build. It complements the Combined Authority's plans for the region's innovation cluster strengths, using place-based advantages.

By exploiting these local strengths, we will tackle the region's key challenges and opportunities. Together, we will grow the impact of our outstanding innovation clusters on the prosperity and success of the region.



Principles and Core Areas

We will draw on the principles set out in Innovate UK's **Plan for Action** and work with the leadership and wider partners across the West of England to deliver our ambitions to:

- **Inspire:** inspiring more businesses in the West of England to undertake all forms of innovation and to generate commercially valuable intellectual property.
- **Involve:** working together across the West of England ecosystem to achieve greater impact than we can separately.
- **Invest:** aligning our resources and investments to ensure that we build on the insights, assets, and capabilities from across the West of England.

In collaboration, we will deliver our joint ambitions through three core areas:

1. **Strengthen strategic partnerships** to ensure we have the necessary relationships to deliver on the areas set out in this Action Plan and to grow the West of England economy through innovation, using local strengths and capabilities.
2. **Provide Innovation support** that is targeted at priority clusters and meets the needs of local businesses and entrepreneurs, sharing expertise and data to produce more informed actions.
3. **Align communication and engagement** to ensure we are reaching, engaging, and inspiring more entrepreneurs and business leaders to innovate.

National Innovation

A growing global population and the aim of improving the quality of life for all against a backdrop of increasing environmental concern already affects the UK economy. It will further transform by the end of the century.

Business innovation is essential in protecting the environment and creating a stronger and more equitable economy. The research and development (R&D) mission in the 2022 Levelling Up White Paper outlines how the benefits of R&D will help local economies. The UK Government is investing in R&D at record levels as it strives to consolidate the UK's position as a science superpower and innovation nation.

To deliver against these commitments, Innovate UK's **Strategic Delivery Plan** articulates how we will co-develop local action plans with local leadership, leveraging the reach and breadth of UKRI collaborations.

This Action Plan sets out our shared ambitions for the West of England, and how we will work together in a systematic place-based approach, to drive greater innovation, resilience, productivity and growth.



STOL: TRANSPORT



JOURNEY TIMES
SPEED TRACKING
ESTIMATES JOURNEY
TIMES FOR



CITY CENTRE
CONGESTION

BRIS

BU

Bishopsworth
On Time

The View from the West of England

The West of England makes a significant economic contribution, estimated at £40 billion per year.* The innovation clusters in the region are of national and international importance.



Place and People

The West of England Combined Authority area and North Somerset make up the functional economic market of the West of England region. The area includes the internationally recognised cities Bristol and Bath, as well as historic market towns like Keynsham, Thornbury and Yate.

The region is closely connected to the rest of South West England, Wales and the Midlands, as well as London and the South East, via rapid train links and motorways. The region faces internationally through Bristol Airport and Bristol Port, the UK's most central deep seaport on the Severn Estuary.

The region is one of the most desirable places to live in the UK, with over 80 people a week relocating from London to Bristol and Bath. With 1.1 million residents and over 91 languages spoken, the region has a global-first approach and a reputation for innovation.

The region's workforce is highly skilled, with 28,000 under-graduates and post-graduates in four top universities joining the talent pool each year, and colleges that are firmly focussed on the region's key sector strengths and skills requirements.

In 2021, Tech Nation rated the region as the third largest private equity investment area outside of London and the South East.*

* www.bristolandbath.co.uk/why-bristol-bath/



Challenge-led innovation

The West of England **Plan for Innovation**, due to be launched by the West of England combined Authority in early 2024, acts as a challenge-led innovation framework to cement the strengths and advantages of the region. The plan's five innovation challenges are designed to empower and leverage place-based strengths and unique advantages to achieve the region's strategic ambitions.



Innovation Cluster



Cluster Strengths



Technology Strengths



Place-based Advantages

Tackling ▼

Innovation Challenges



New and better ways of moving people and goods



New and better products, services and systems for climate and nature



Securing good training for innovation



New ways of creating homes, places and vibrant communities



Putting our world class innovation cluster on the map



Challenge-led innovation involves connecting knowledge and insights from various disciplines and industries to foster essential change. This approach is built on the understanding that some of the most exciting and useful innovations emerge when pursuing other goals.

The West of England Innovation Challenges allow people and businesses to participate in substantial investments to drive change, generating national and global success while crucially, helping achieve regional ambitions that benefit residents.

The key cluster and technology strengths identified in the West of England have clear overlaps with Innovate UK's domains of Net Zero, Healthy Living & Agriculture and Digital & Technologies:

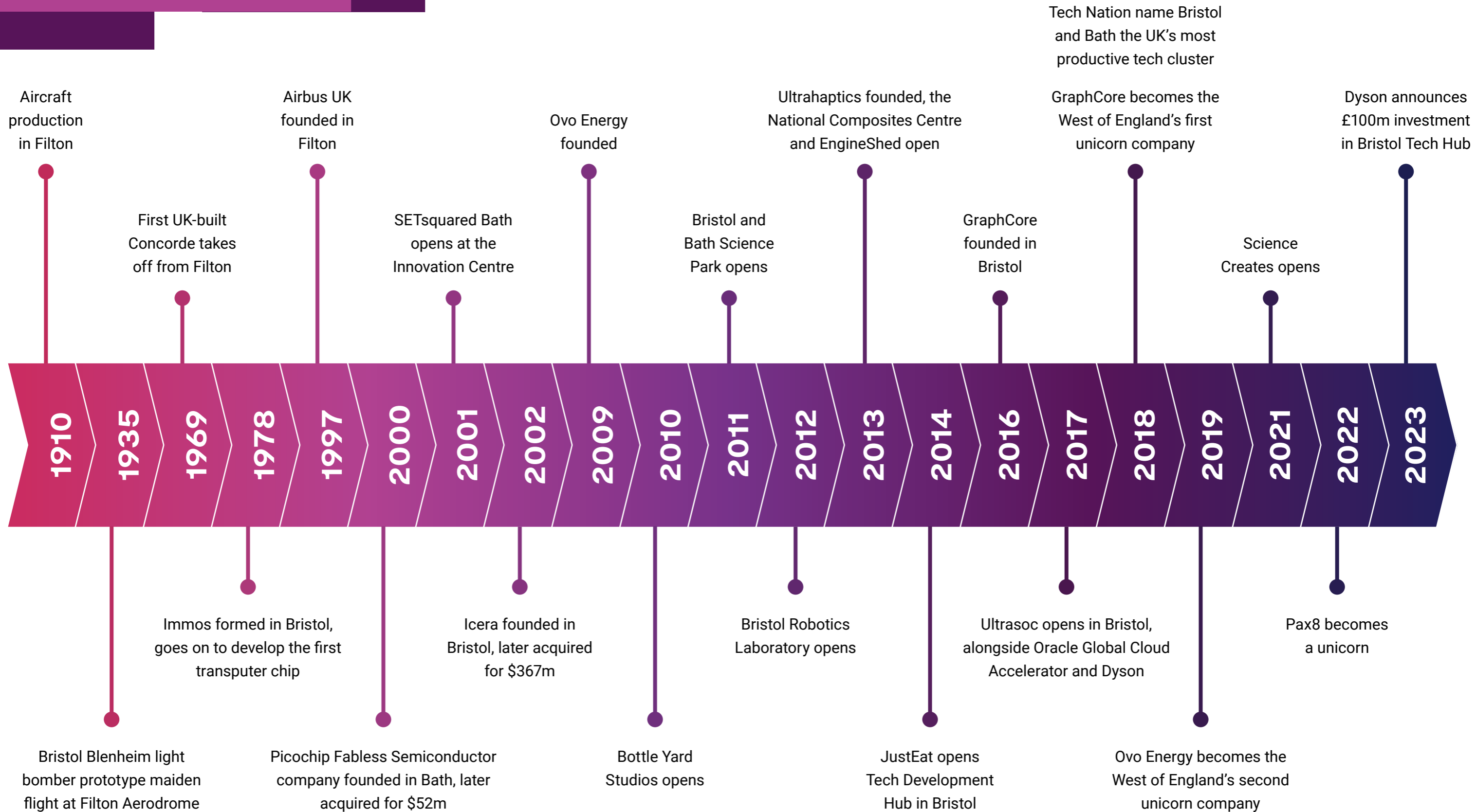
Cluster strengths

- Immersive creative
- Advanced engineering
- Health sciences
- Sustainable fintech

Technology strengths

- Artificial intelligence, digital & future communications
- Quantum
- Robotics & smart machines
- Advanced materials & manufacturing
- Energy & environmental technologies

The West of England's Innovation History





Today's Outlook

Innovation is a key pillar of the West of England Combined Authority's Regional Strategy. The Combined Authority and Innovate UK are committed to encouraging businesses, organisations, and communities to come together to tackle society's biggest challenges through innovation.

The collaboration between Innovate UK and the West of England Combined Authority will bring together the region's world-class R&D centres, academic institutions and businesses to boost productivity, create meaningful jobs and safeguard our environment.

Innovation Assets

The region contains a significant cluster of innovation assets.

The reputation of the West of England as a region of excellence in civil aerospace, including wing design and landing gear systems, has been strengthened by joint industry and government investment in aerospace research and technology development projects and associated infrastructure. The region contains a significant cluster of innovation assets. Both Airbus and GKN Aerospace have



built open access research, development and test facilities in the region namely; the Aerospace Integrated Research Centre and the Global Technology Centre, respectively. The **Aerospace Technology Institute** (ATI) programme, delivered in partnership with the Department for Business & Trade and Innovate UK, has enabled small organisations to progress their individual technology development alongside the OEMS and Primes, ensuring applicability of their product for the next generation of aircraft, and improve supply chain access. For example, Domin Fluid Power Ltd is developing electrified hydraulic power generation systems in the Airbus Operations Ltd led “LandOne” project.

The Innovate UK managed **NATEP** programme has enabled SME’s currently in or looking to enter the aerospace supply chain to engage in innovation projects. Through engagement with a network of regional advisory boards, SME’s are offered support and feedback on the development of their funding proposals and the opportunity to engage with potential end users, including large UK organisations and aerospace primes. Wavedrives, a Bath-based SME, is developing electrical actuation technology as a result.

Innovate UK’s Catapult centres have a strong regional presence, including the **National Composites Centre**, **Digital Catapult** and **Compound Semiconductor Applications Catapult**.

From 2024, £22 million from both the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and Innovate UK is supporting two new **Innovation and Knowledge Centres** (IKCs). REWIRE, based at the University of Bristol, is set to deliver pioneering semiconductor technologies and new electronic devices. Semiconductors, also known as microchips, are a key component in nearly every electrical device from mobile phones and medical equipment to electric vehicles. This investment will build awareness of the semiconductor industry and fill key gaps in the UK’s workforce talent and training.

The South Gloucestershire Tech Arc, Bristol’s **Temple Quarter**, the **Bath Creative Quarter** and the **Bristol and Bath Science Park** offer state-of-the-art facilities for engineering, tech and creative industries.

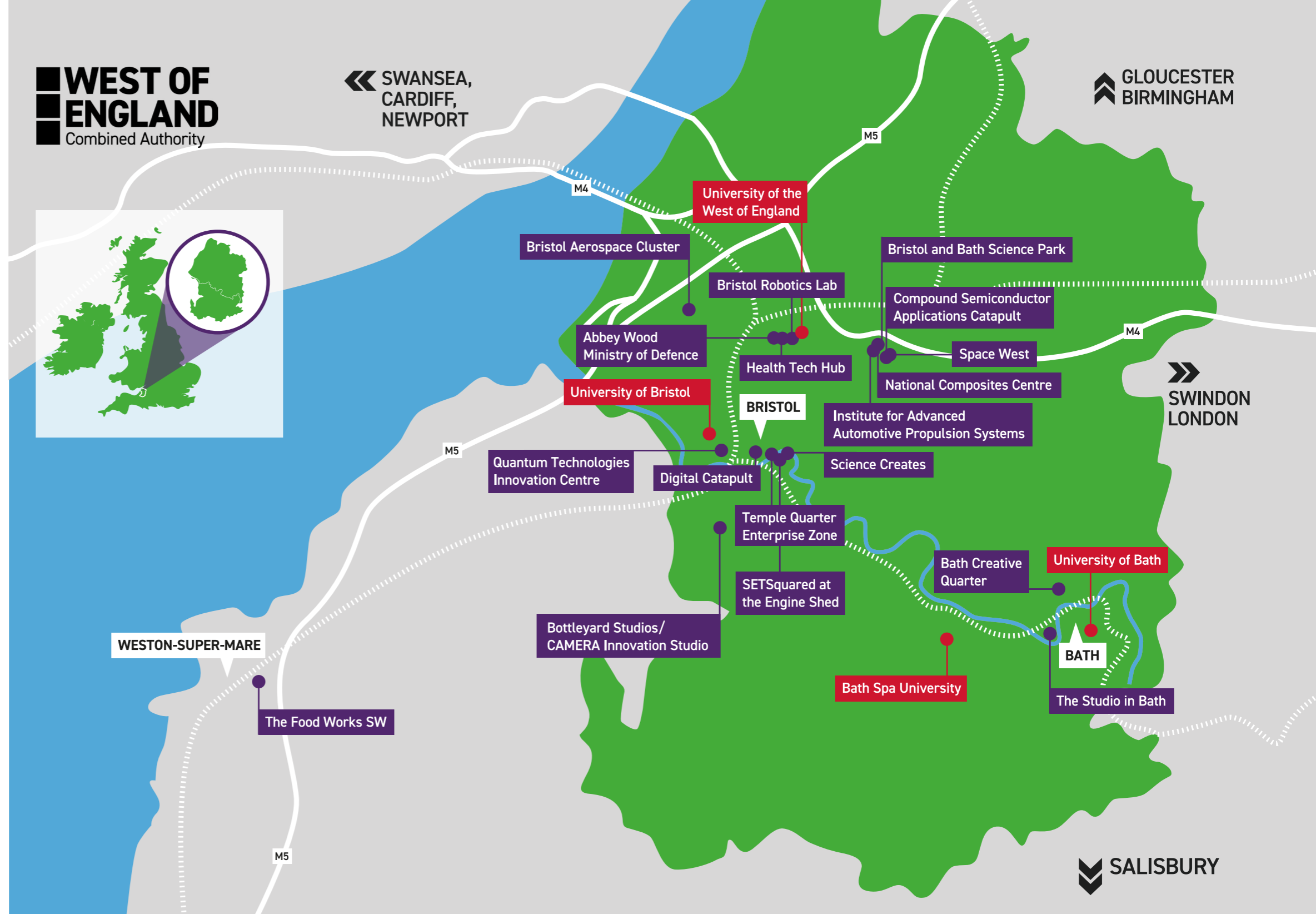
The **University of Bristol, University of Bath, University of the West of England (UWE Bristol), and Bath Spa University** have a strong track record of coming together with industry in consortia and projects, translating cutting edge academic research into ground-breaking application in industry and business.

The **SETSquared** partnership is the region's number one university business incubator and has achieved global recognition. Bristol and Bath Universities are founding members of the network that turns local innovation into thriving businesses.

In 2014, Innovate UK piloted the **ICURe** scheme with SETSquared, to facilitate the commercialisation of academic research and the development of high-potential spin-out companies. SETSquared has been a core partner in the Innovate UK ICURe programme in the years since.

Between 2019 and 2021, Innovate UK invested a further £3m through SETSquared to deliver a **Regional Angel Investment Accelerator**. The scheme provided grant funding as non-diluted co-investment alongside angel-led capital, attracting new angel investors and increasing diversity in the early-stage investment community, encouraging Angels to back disruptive technology businesses which are typically seen as riskier prospects.

This deeply embedded academic-industry partnership generates tangible impacts. Notably, some of the UK's most successful spinouts originated in the region including Ziylo and **Ultraleap**.



Many of the UK's Quantum start-ups are generated in the West of England, thanks in part to the significant commercialisation opportunities spearheaded by the University of Bristol, with exemplary strengths in quantum computing, sensors, communication, and simulation.

The creator of ICURe alumni Ziylo established **Science Creates** - a Bristol based **deep tech** eco-system. Innovate UK partnered with **SCVC** to invest in cutting edge technology for the future economy, contributing to our **investor partnership programme**.



Achieving Net Zero

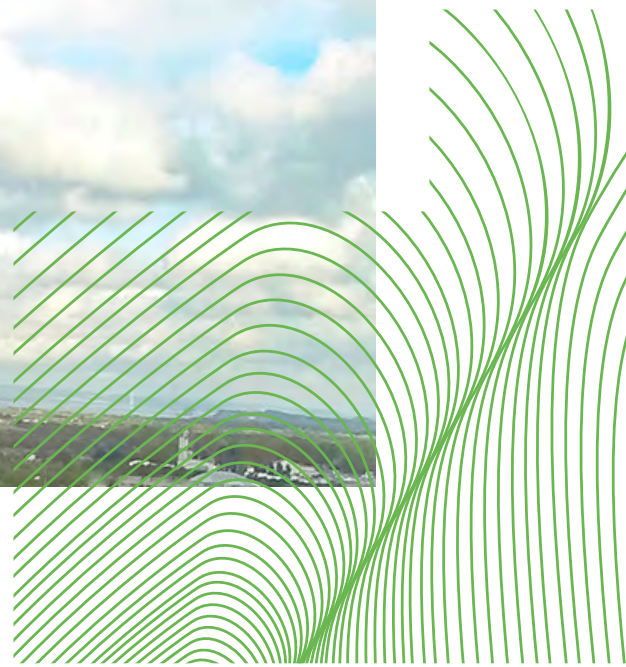
The region's **clean energy and environmental technologies** cluster has over a thousand enterprises, employing upwards of 10,000 people. The region is a centre for tidal technology development and energy from waste schemes. Hydro-electric and landfill gas schemes are also emerging via the **Centre for Sustainable Energy** in Bath.

The **advanced engineering** cluster is continually pushing the boundaries of net zero innovation. Regional history in aerospace, mechanical, and computer engineering has spawned globally recognised expertise in propulsion, **robotics**, materials science, space, modern construction and more. Subsequently, a powerful cluster of aerospace and engineering activity has emerged.

The Bristol and Bath Science Park focuses on **advanced materials and manufacturing**. The site hosts the **National Composites Centre (NCC)**, the University of Bath's Institute for Advanced Automotive Propulsion Systems and the Centre for Modelling and Simulation.

Hydrogen is a key technology area for the West of England, with the NCC exploring innovation in the design and development of hydrogen pressure vessels, pipes, and cryogenic tanks to develop sustainable solutions.

In December 2023, Bristol City Council was awarded £4.9 million through Innovate UK's **Net Zero Living programme** – to enable a programme of engagement with citizens in three city neighbourhoods to identify net zero projects, infrastructure and data requirements and financing mechanisms, and to develop local supply chain skills to meet local net zero needs.



Part of the High Value Manufacturing Catapult, the **National Composites Centre (NCC)** is solving some of the world's most complex engineering challenges and drives industrial transformation through the access to advanced composites design and development, digital manufacturing and sustainable engineering expertise.

The NCC has supported some 300 businesses annually. Of these, over 33% are SMEs, many of which go on to collaborate with the Catapult on product, process, or service innovation. The NCC contributes £40m GVA per annum to the West of England economy, supporting 1,400 regional jobs.

Over the last five years, 2018/19 to 2022/23, Innovate UK has invested over £50 million into the NCC.

The NCC works with the West of England's globally prominent aerospace cluster that

includes pioneering companies; Airbus, GKN, Vertical Aerospace, Rolls-Royce and ZeroAvia, delivering the innovation needed to advance net zero flight and unlock the potential of next generation of fuel-efficient aircraft.

The NCC hosts **Space West**, a collaboration of research, innovation, and industry leaders at the forefront of growing the space sector and meeting next generation challenges like dynamic networking, space based solar power and in-orbit servicing.

The NCC will host Isambard-AI, the UK's most powerful supercomputer, in partnership with the University of Bristol. Being installed in 2024, this national asset provides a unique springboard to pioneer a life-cycle approach to accelerate the journey from data and digital innovation to impact; from drug discovery to astrophysics and advanced materials.

Digital Transformation



The West of England is a cluster for **AI, digital, and future communications** innovation, including **FinTech** and **LegalTech**.

The region's **immersive creative** sector contributes £2 billion to the regional economy through almost 7,000 businesses. It includes video game and metaverse development, digital media, animation, experiential marketing and a range of businesses that specialise in haptics and bringing digital worlds to life, such as Ultraleap, Groundwaves, and Beat Blocks.

The West of England's well-established ethos of sustainability has created appetite to focus on **sustainable fintech**. The region is home to a recognised fintech cluster, with particular strengths in WealthTech, payments, and lending, contributing just under £314 million to the local economy.

The arrival of **Isambard-AI** at the NCC in 2024 locates the most powerful supercomputer in the UK and Europe in the region and establishes a dedicated **AI Research Resource**. The new supercomputing facility is expected to be used by a wide range of organisations UK-wide to harness the power of **AI**. It will play a vital role in facilitating innovation in areas of regional expertise such as health and climate, as well as diffusion of AI applications into businesses and organisations.

Bristol Robotics Laboratory is one of the most comprehensive centres for multi-disciplinary robotics research in the UK, and world leading in current thinking on service robotics, agritech, intelligent autonomous systems and bioengineering.

The region is home to the Bristol and Bath cyber cluster bringing together the cyber ecosystem connecting entrepreneurs, employers, practitioners, educators, investors and collaborators. The University of Bristol is one of the **EPSRC-NCSC Academic Centres of Excellence in Cyber Security Research**. The University of Bath leads major programmes in research on human aspects of security and privacy including the £3.5 million **Digital Security by Design Social Science Hub**, funded through Innoate UK and EPSRC.

The region boasts one of the largest clusters of **quantum** companies in the UK - university spin outs include PsiQuantum, KETS Quantum Security, **QLM Technology** and Phasecraft which cumulatively raise hundreds of millions of pounds of investment.



©Nick Smith



Mayden creates digital technologies that redefine the capabilities available to both clinicians and patients. Collaborating with mental health services, Mayden constructs systems to enhance the provision of high-quality, consistent, and efficient care.

The **Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP)** forged between Mayden and the University of Bath aims to create, validate, and implement statistical models predicting patient engagement and optimal treatment pathways. The goal is to empower services to provide more effective and efficient care,

as well as identify cases where a patient's response deviates from expectations.

"This is the third University KTP which has been awarded by Innovate UK with their highest grading of 'Outstanding' in as many months. We are delighted to continue embedding critical knowledge and skills through our world-class research and knowledge exchange." - Caroline Quest, Director of Research and Innovation Services, University of Bath.



With business growth support from Innovate UK, Quantum technology innovator **QLM Technology** raised £3.1 million in seed funding, revamped its marketing and IP strategies and won a Bloomberg climate innovation award. The Bristol-based SME developed a pioneering proton monitoring camera that can visualise and quantify greenhouse gas emissions, scanning gas distribution stations and rapidly detecting methane leaks.

QLM's Tunable Diode Lidar camera, which can be mounted on a tower or a drone, uses quantum technology to count protons and identify methane. The camera can scan large areas and not only locate a leak rapidly, but also quantify the amount of gas escaping.

"Innovate UK...was instrumental in guiding us through our seed investment journey." - Doug Millington-Smith, Applications Manager, QLM Technology.



A spin-out company from the University of Bristol, Ziyo, was acquired in a deal worth up to \$800 million (£625 million) in probably one of the largest successes in the history of the West of England.

Ziyo developed an innovative technology platform, which could be a key component to enable the next generation of insulin, able to react and adapt to glucose levels in the blood, therefore eliminating the risk of hypoglycaemia – dangerously low blood sugar levels – and leading to better metabolic control for people living with the disease. The biotech company sealed the deal with Copenhagen-based pharmaceutical giant, Novo Nordisk, who gained the rights to Ziyo’s glucose-binding molecules in therapeutic areas, which have the potential to become a revolutionary treatment for diabetes.

Ziyo participated in cohort zero of the Innovate UK ICURe programme and the grant funding Ziyo received was pivotal in developing the technology. Harry Destecroix simultaneously launched the Science Creates deep-tech ecosystem, which included Bristol’s first deep tech incubator to which he attributes much of Ziyo’s success.





Healthy Living

The West of England hosts a prominent **health and life sciences sector**, characterised by innovation in fields such as diagnostics, medical technology and advanced therapeutics.

The region's strengths in **robotics and AI** have applications in healthcare where innovations have the potential to revolutionise surgery, patient care, and healthcare delivery.

Digital health is an important sector to the region's ecosystem, and local organisations are building apps and devices that enable new ways of testing vision, detecting cancer, and managing pharmaceuticals. In addition to technologies that directly impact healthcare users, companies are

also developing diagnostic products and services to support the fight against antimicrobial resistance through the sustainable use of antibiotics. One of those companies, Genome Labs, has received over £2 million Innovate UK funding to develop their GenomeKey device for diagnosing antimicrobial resistant infections.

The advanced therapeutics sector is supported by Health Innovation West of England, the NHS Blood and Transplant Gene Therapy Hub, and the Pfizer Vaccine Centre of Excellence. The strong research base in the area has led to innovative companies forming and relocating to the region, like Scarlet Therapeutics, Imophoron, and Cytoseek.



CYTOSEEK

CytoSeek Ltd, a discovery-stage biotech company developing the next generation of cell therapies to treat cancer, has to date raised £3.57million with further funding rounds to be announced. The funding supported the development of CytoSeek's Artificial Membrane-Binding Protein (AMBP) platform for its internal cell therapy programs and the development and out-licence of its novel AMBP technology.

CytoSeek's proprietary AMBP technology provides a route to enhanced functionality for cell therapies to improve their tumour-killing performance, without the need for genetic modification of the cells. The Company is deploying the AMBP technology to improve the efficacy of cell therapies for the treatment of cancers caused by solid tumours.

The company launched in late 2019 with an investment of £1.1million, which included over £305,000 from Innovate UK and funding from UKI2S, Parkwalk and angel investors as part of Innovate UK's Investor Partnerships programme. The company then went on to raise £3.57million led by SCVC, an early-stage deep tech EIS investment fund, also an investor partner within Innovate UK's Investor Partnerships programme.

Innovators are enabled by ecosystems like Science Creates, which secured £8.5 million from UKRI, the University of Bristol and private investors to build its third site close to the Science Creates incubator in Old Market, Bristol. The new incubator will provide capacity to incubate approximately 275 new companies from West of England universities and beyond over the next 5 years.

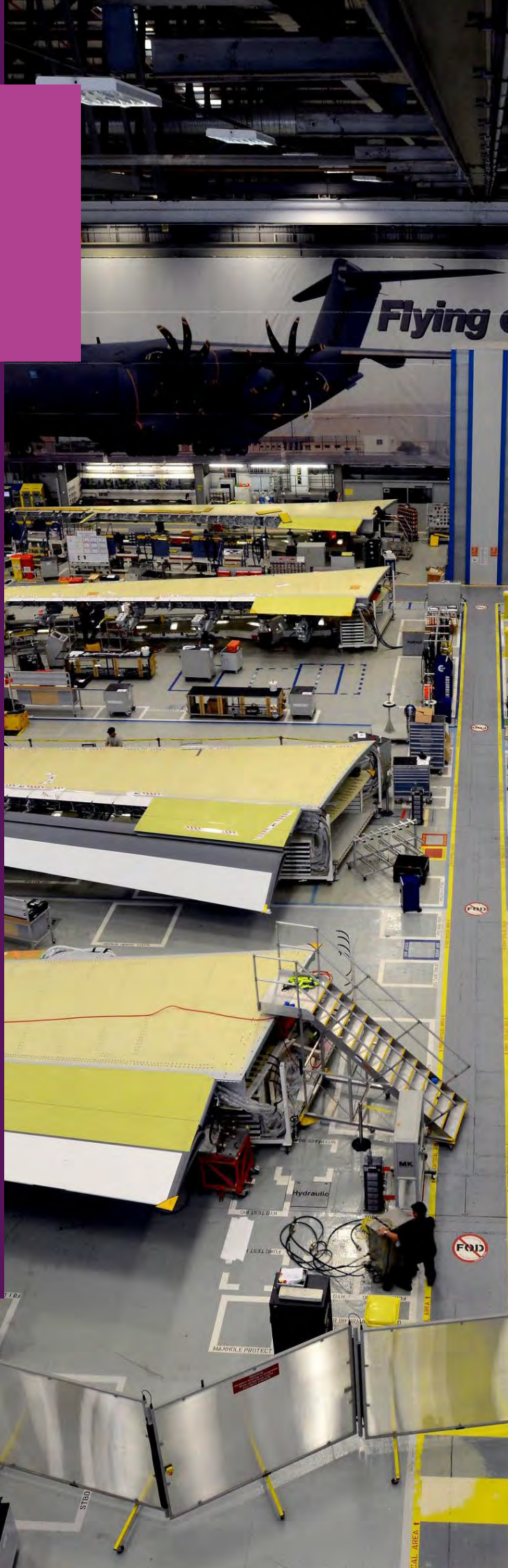
The region hosts a range of SMEs that are innovating in Agritech, including using biostimulants and nanotechnologies to increase plant biomass production which improves crop yield, and aeroponic farming technology for greenhouses, polytunnels and vertical farms.

Innovate UK in the West of England

Investment into the West of England

Over the last five years (2018/19 to 2022/23) Innovate UK has invested £281 million in innovation projects and assets in the West of England. £190 million was awarded to businesses and of that £87 million was awarded to small and medium size enterprises.

£91 million has been invested through academic, research and public sector organisations, including local Innovate UK Catapult centres, for supporting business innovation and strengthening the relationship between industry and academia. This is particularly important for SMEs who are less likely to have the research capability in-house and need the support of external research organisations to help progress new ideas to commercialisation.





Programmes in the West of England

Innovate UK's investments have aligned with the West of England's strengths to directly address opportunities.

Innovate UK has supported many ground-breaking projects in the West of England, including Airbus' X-Wing Alpha new wing concepts, ONEheart next-gen commercial aircraft designs, and the Vertical Aerospace Group Ltd to develop vertical take-off and landing electrical aircraft.

Developments in transport and alternative fuels are also attracting investment. This includes £7.9 million from Innovate UK into Fusion Processing Ltd, for developing zero-emission hydrogen-electric autonomous HGV deployment and autonomous bus services.

In the creative industries, Innovate UK's Creative Catalyst programme awarded £859,190 to 18 SMEs in the West of England in 2023 to deliver ground-breaking innovations.

Innovate UK's Compound Semiconductor Applications Catapult launched the **Future Telecoms Hub** at the Bristol & Bath Science Park in November 2023. This £6.5 million investment will fund activities across the future telecoms landscape and develop new compound semiconductor technologies to improve the speed, energy efficiency and security of our communications networks.

Innovate UK supports the West of England Combined Authority's **Digital Engineering Technology & Innovation programme**, through the co-investment of the HVM

Catapult's NCC and the support of the Digital Catapult. This partnership brings together advanced engineering companies, digital technology pioneers and universities to push the boundaries of digital engineering.

Innovate UK's support is about much more than funding. Our Innovate UK Business Growth advisers have well-established relationships and ways of working with the business support agencies in the West of England that assist businesses in fulfilling their growth and scaling potential. In the financial year 22/23, we supported 310 companies to scale and grow across the West of England. 15 raised over £20.5 million in investment. 16 secured almost £4.6 million in grant funding. 39 created 278 new jobs, and 34 accessed new global and sectoral markets.



©Jon Craig

MyWorld

MyWorld, a programme funded through UKRI's Strength in Places Fund, is built on the production, technology and research strengths of the West of England region to create a globally unique proposition for creative technology research and innovation.

Bringing together 13 diverse partners across academia and industry, from the University of Bristol and the University of Bath, to the BBC, Bristol Old Vic and Aardman Animations, MyWorld's strength lies in the collaboration between these organisations, working together to not only create the cutting-edge in creative technology but to create a more prosperous, equitable and sustainable West of England.

MyWorld is using investment into creative technology to stimulate growth and societal change in the industry and in the region. It's the place where science, engineering and art meet and we want to make them all accessible for everyone. The MyWorld programme provides opportunities for businesses of all sizes to:

Discover: Access pre-market trends in technology via an extensive research programme in our partner Universities

Build: Accelerate product and process prototype development through access to innovation funding and production facilities

Learn: Access MyWorld skills development training or create a talent pool ahead of the market through academic and industry short courses.

To date, MyWorld has provided creative technology innovation support to over 130 SMEs, distributing over £2.5 million to businesses for creative technology research and development with long term benefits to the West of England.

MyWorld has also supported over 750 individual learners through skills programmes and has invested in new creative research facilities, accessible to businesses of all sizes at the Universities of Bristol and Bath as well as Bath Spa University.

MyWorld has contributed to bringing a further £20 million in additional investment to the region's creative economy so far.



Delivering our Action Plan for the West of England

At the heart of this Action Plan is the relationship between Innovate UK and the West of England Combined Authority.

Core Areas and Actions

The West of England Combined Authority and Innovate UK are jointly committing to undertake the actions in this plan to drive forward local transformational change as we recommit and reaffirm our shared ambitions.

We will deliver our joint innovation ambitions, through three core areas:

- 1. Strategic Partnerships** to ensure we have the necessary relationships to grow the West of England economy through innovation and maximise local strengths and capabilities to deliver this plan and tackle challenges including those set out in the West of England Plan for Innovation.
- 2. Innovation Support** that is targeted at priority clusters and meets the needs of local businesses and entrepreneurs, sharing expertise and data so we can take more informed actions.
- 3. Communication and Engagement** to ensure we are reaching and inspiring more entrepreneurs and business leaders to innovate.





Strategic Partnerships

We will jointly deliver strategic partnerships across the core areas of:

Increasing investment in innovation:

use our joint convening power to ensure national agencies and partners operating in the West of England are joined up on relevant activities, including UKRI Research Councils, Government Departments and the British Business Bank, to encourage more investment into the region.

Innovate UK presence: ensure Innovate UK services continue to be increasingly visible, active and well understood across the West of England, enabled by a connected innovation network of partners and places.

Strategic forums: participate in key forums and working groups, providing appropriate representation and sector expertise from across Innovate UK, including on a West of England innovation board which will provide strategic insight and guidance.

Supporting targeted collaborations where innovation priorities align between the Action Plan and Innovate UK's Domains. This will include the co-creation of SME support programmes and aligned funding opportunities, and joint planning of place-based innovation programmes.



Strengthening Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and SME relationships: build on the strong relationships between HEIs and SMEs to drive business innovation and translational research.

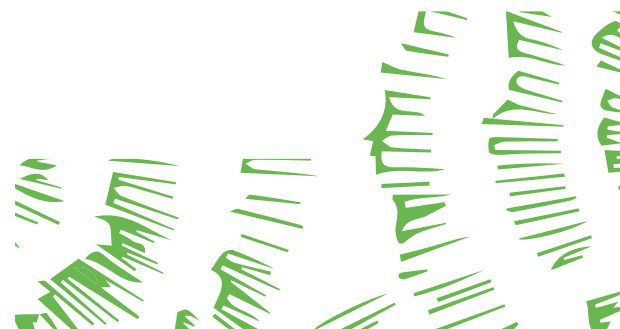
Innovate UK Catapults: build on activities across the Catapults to strengthen SME engagement with world class facilities and support.



For instance:

- The NCC will deliver advanced manufacturing, engineering, space-tech, hydrogen and Isambard supercomputer initiatives.
- The Digital Catapult will support the formation and growth of companies involved in Virtual Environments and

XR, develop innovation and expertise in Future Networks and Telecoms Systems, and expedite transfer of knowledge from creative industries to other industrial sectors.



Innovation Support

We will collaborate in specific areas including:

Cluster growth: connect our services and programmes to grow regional cluster strengths, acting as an integral part of the ecosystem and taking positive action to support established and emerging capabilities. We will be guided by the intelligence gathered through working groups set up by the Combined Authority to engage industry on new innovation and investment opportunities.

Co-investment opportunities: alignment of programmes to grow local innovation clusters, for example, digital solutions, leveraging Isambard-AI.

Attracting new businesses: put innovation at the heart of attracting inward investment to the region. Support proactive inward investment campaigns targeting international markets with a focus on:

- Advanced materials, manufacturing and clean tech

- Digital technologies – quantum, AI and cyber security
- Creative and immersive technology
- Health and life sciences

Data sharing and business intelligence: enable data sharing on Innovate UK business applications and programmes delivered in the West of England Combined Authority area, with the aim of improving targeted support to aid monitoring of take up and impact.

Inclusive innovation: promote research, innovation and business support opportunities to a wide range of communities via increased skills and talent, and pursue the Combined Authority's inclusive innovation ambitions through piloting activities for

©National Composites Centre (NCC)



place-based inclusive innovation and the Innovate UK **No Limits** platform.

Toolkits: pilot the Combined Authority's development of a toolkit which will enable the creation of research and innovation missions that work towards the challenges identified within the Combined Authority's Plan for Innovation.

Identify local expertise: identify appropriate local expertise to feed into Innovate UK's pool of independent assessors, adding further to the local lens of assessment in national programmes.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships: Drive further awareness of the opportunities provided by the KTP programme for

businesses across the West of England, to boost the volume of high quality applications from universities and research institutes in the region.

Business support: develop and deliver new initiatives targeting high growth potential businesses, aligned with the region's key clusters.

Innovation finance: we will work alongside our Investor Partnership network (for example SCVC, Maven, QantX and SETSquared) and the British Business Bank to convene regional and national finance networks to support greater access to new angel investment and venture capital opportunities for innovative businesses in the region.



Communication and Engagement

We will undertake:

Joint communication: collaborate on communications and marketing in areas that support the ambitions of both parties.

Innovation events: work with local partners to inspire innovation and promote opportunities to businesses and diverse communities in the West of England.

Amplify: increase take-up of Innovate UK and other innovation support working in partnership with the West of England Growth Hub, informed by co-produced datasets.

Maximise visibility: synergise business facing websites and programme information with the new **Innovate UK Innovation Hub** to maximise regional reach.



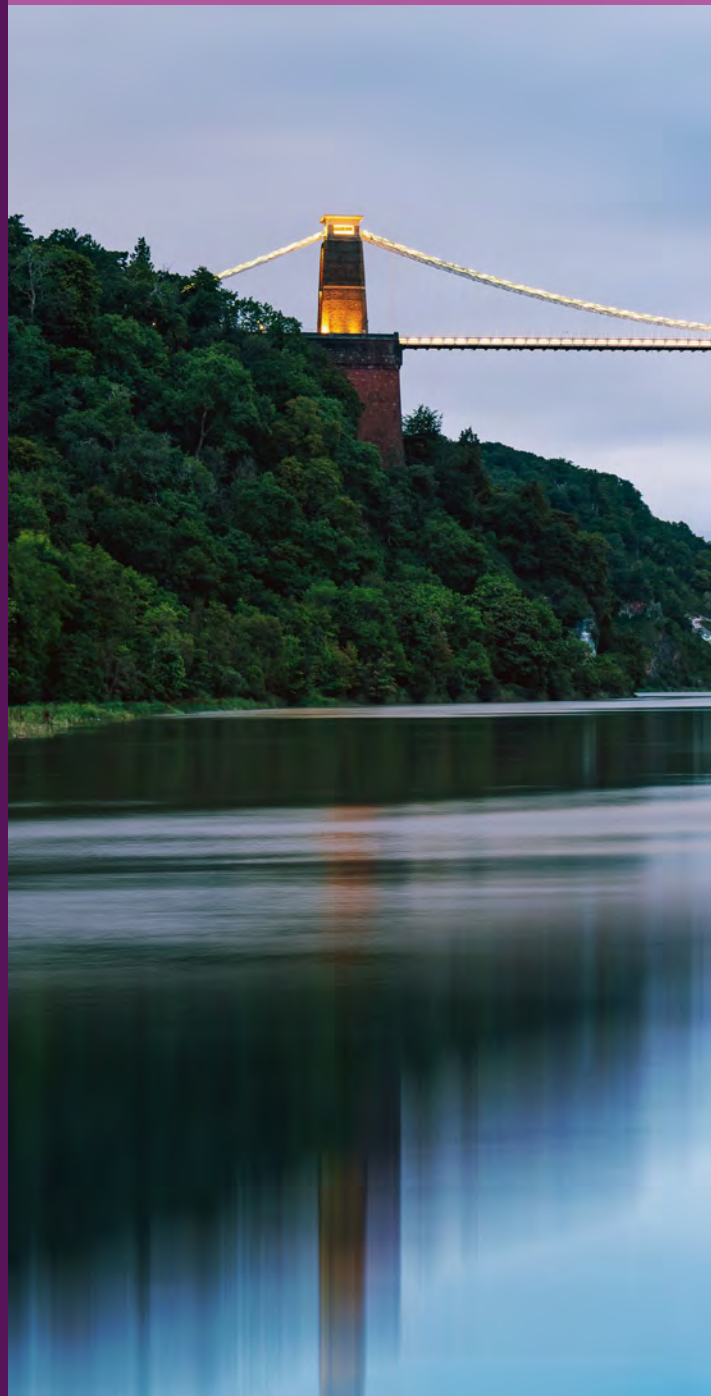
Connecting the landscape: support and facilitate connectivity throughout the innovation ecosystem across all of Innovate UK's products and services, Innovate UK Catapults, universities and to coordinate and complement innovation activity between national and local programmes.

Monitoring, Delivery and Outcomes

Innovate UK and the West of England Combined Authority have joint responsibility for overseeing the implementation of this plan. The plan is intended to be an agile and evolving document, which responds to local needs and economic pressures over the next three years 2024-27.

Following the launch of this plan, Innovate UK and the West of England Combined Authority will co-develop a delivery plan which will set out our specific actions for the coming year. At the end of each year, we will assess progress against the actions and create a delivery plan and priorities for the subsequent year, evolving existing and creating new actions as appropriate, in line with the principles and core areas in which we have agreed to work.

The overarching outcome of our West of England Action Plan is that, by working in partnership, we will ensure that businesses in the West of England are more resilient and have more help to grow through innovation.



The high-level impacts for West of England are:

- More resilient and innovation active businesses
- Greater diversity of skills and talent involved in innovation
- New and more rewarding jobs
- Higher levels of public and private finance for businesses to innovate and grow
- Stronger entrepreneurial culture leading to innovative start-ups and spinouts from universities and research organisations
- More attractive for inward investment and stronger international trade

And contribution to national impacts:

- More innovative businesses developing solutions to national and global challenges
- Supporting scale up and positioning innovative businesses in supply chains of the future
- Higher national productivity
- A stronger UK-wide research and innovation ecosystem cementing the UK's position as a global science powerhouse





Innovate
UK

**WEST OF
ENGLAND**
Combined Authority



ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk

03003 214357 • support@iuk.ukri.org • [@innovateuk](https://twitter.com/innovateuk)
Innovate UK, Polaris House, North Star Avenue, Swindon, SN2 1FL