



West Midlands Digital Roadmap

2024-2027

Contents

Mayor Foreword	3
Cllr Harley Foreword	4
The Digital Roadmap	6
Our region	7
Where are we now?	9
Significant Challenges Across the Region	11
Roadmap Missions (2024-2027)	12
Governance and Delivery	36

Mayor Foreword

Collaboration is key to the success of our region in the months and years ahead. The West Midlands Combined Authority plays a vital role in this as a regional advocate and convenor - actively promoting partnerships to achieve our collective ambitions. It's only by working together – with local, regional and national partners - that we can harness our remarkable potential. Our second Digital Roadmap sets out how we will work together to achieve our jointly held priorities across our five Digital Roadmap mission areas. We're blessed to have the people, infrastructure, and private sector firepower we need to fulfil our ambitions.

That's why we're updating our Digital Roadmap to further leverage the tremendous knowledge and experience of our region's innovators to help us prosper. Indeed, this is the very thinking that led us to appoint our region's first Tech Commissioner to harness technology for the benefit of local people – enhancing our economic resilience. The recently established Business Growth West Midlands will also help to support and grow all of our sectors - including the tech sector which is worth over £15bn to our region's economy.

In many respects, our region is already going places and demonstrating its digital prowess. We're leading the way with genuinely world-class digital

connectivity – with the West Midlands confirmed as the best-connected Combined Authority region for 5G. We're doubling down on this 'best in class' reputation by accelerating digital innovation and adoption – driving economic growth and building a more inclusive region. Digital technologies can transform our region and the WMCA is playing its part. Whether it's our SWIFT smart ticketing scheme enabling over 50 million journeys a year, our digital bootcamp funding helping thousands of residents to access jobs or our pioneering Smart City Region programme that is improving health outcomes by scaling-up remote monitoring and community diagnosis, we're proving that digital done right changes lives for the better.

So I look forward to continued collaboration delivering results right across our region and I hope we can work with our partners to shout louder about what we're doing. The West Midlands has the potential to truly be a digital powerhouse for the UK and our refreshed Digital Roadmap lays out our trajectory over the next three years. Together, we will succeed.

Andy Street
Mayor of the West Midlands



Cllr Harley Foreword

The West Midlands has gone through a period of significant change in the last two years since the production of our last Digital Roadmap. We have seen a growth in innovation and the use of technology by communities and businesses, which has resulted in the digital technologies sector now being worth £5bn across the region and around 25% of the region's workforce doing at least part of their jobs from home, enabled by digital technologies and the region's improving connectivity infrastructure. There have also been significant changes in the policy landscape for the WMCA and our local authority partners, for example resources secured through the Deeper Devolution Deal and enhanced capacity at the WMCA to drive forward our digital priorities.

More frequent and in-depth analysis of data and intelligence has also enabled us to update our understanding of the regional landscape and this is informing more targeted discussions with our partners all part of a more rigorous approach to the Roadmap. Our analysis shows that we have made progress in key areas, for example being the best connected region for 5G coverage at 65% geographic coverage, although analysis of digital inclusion and public services metrics show a gap to the national average on key measures like the number of adults that

are digitally excluded based on their ability to complete foundational digital and data tasks and the number of adults accessing their medical records online. These are issues that need to be addressed to ensure our region remains on the path of inclusive growth.

This new landscape illustrates why we are now updating the Digital Roadmap, building on the good work we started in 2021. We are using this report as a call to action for partners to work with us to deliver, enable and influence activities over the next three years which will see digital driving our efforts to create a digitally inclusive economy which prioritizes carbon reduction and improving public services for communities.

Cllr Patrick Harley

WMCA Culture and Digital Portfolio Holder and
Leader of Dudley Council





The Digital Roadmap

The Digital Roadmap (2024-2027) brings together the activities that will help enable the region to become a fairer, greener, healthier, better connected and more prosperous region for all.

These activities are purposely designed to continue our journey towards becoming a forward looking and inclusive digital economy, where data is used to improve our public services and the latest technology used to reduce our carbon footprint.

All of the activities and projects listed in this Roadmap have been designed on the back of ongoing engagement with Local Authorities and other partners on digital matters, including a review of jointly held regional opportunities, challenges and priorities. The activities and projects will act as the foundation to our Roadmap workplan.

Summary - 5 Missions for 2024 - 2027



Securing access for everyone to digital opportunities, particularly those in poverty



Sharing and using data to improve people's lives



Becoming the UK's best-connected region



Realising the potential of digital to transform our economy and build economic resilience



Using digital public services to build a fairer, greener, healthier region

Our region

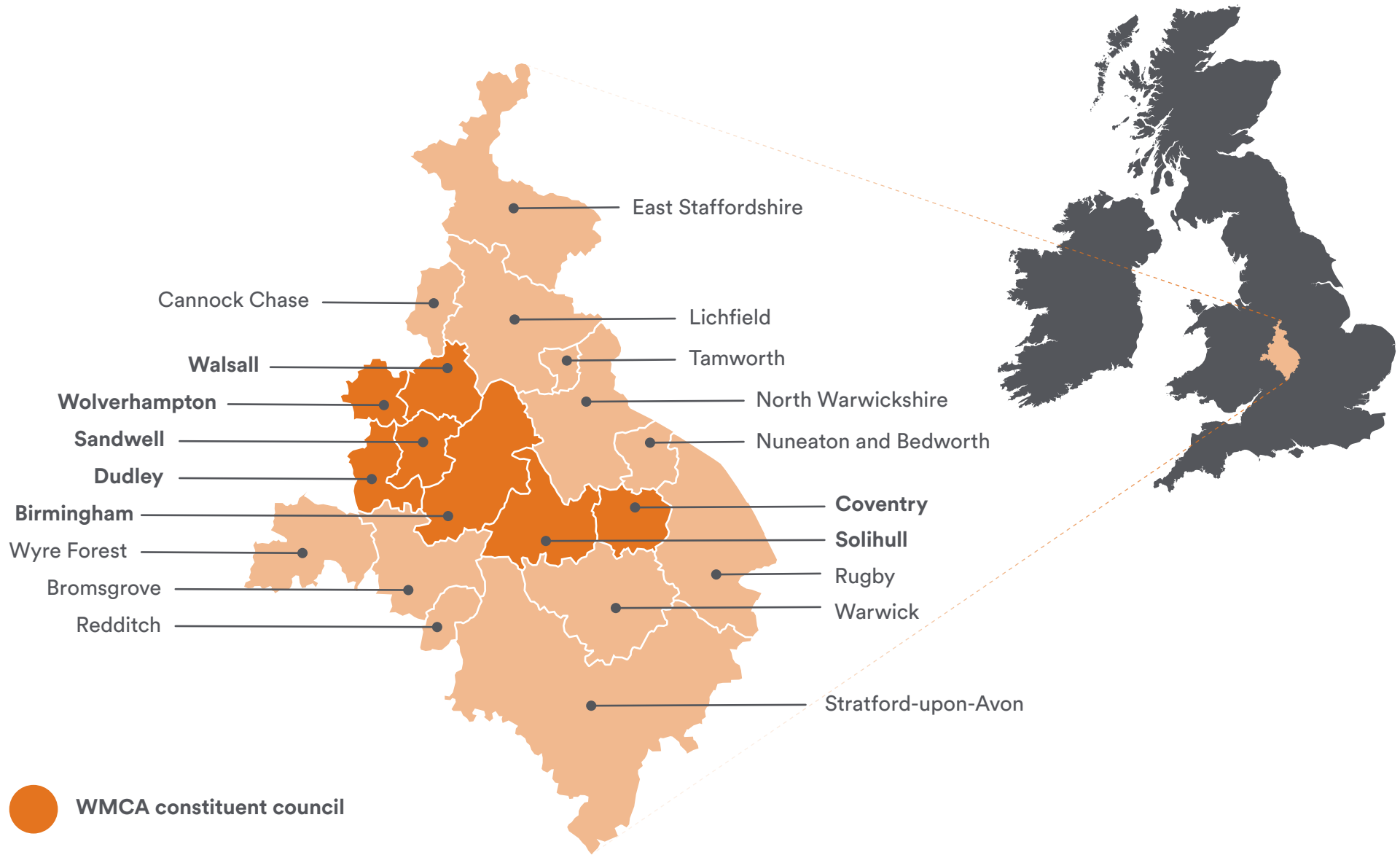
The West Midlands region is a place of enormous potential and a strong economic history. The region's key economic sectors are helping to make this a possibility and the Plan for Growth Strategy demonstrates how key clusters can create an additional £3.2bn worth of GVA and up to 44,800 jobs. Creating growth is even more important for the region given that economic forecasts suggests that the West Midlands will experience below average growth without significant intervention. The region is projected to have a GVA of £131bn in 2040, an increase of 25.5% with a yearly growth rate of 1.16% - below the projected UK annual yearly growth rate of 1.35%. With this outlook in mind the WMCA and partners are working to ensure regional strengths and opportunities and specialisms can drive growth in the coming years:

- **West Midland Tech strengths**

- The Tech sector is worth £15.3bn to the regional economy with 144,000 people working in tech roles and 2,400 businesses.
- £4bn is generated through the creative and digital sector.

- International trade in digital services as a percentage of regional GVA is at 1.4%, and in the upper quartile.
- There are 300 Artificial Intelligence businesses in the wider Midlands region (11% of the national total). This represents a 122% growth in the last 10 years.
- Manufacturing is one of the key drivers of growth in the region, generating £16bn in GVA and there are 32,500 students doing STEM subjects in the region. 61% of the region's healthcare sector is in MedTech, 8% of the UK's overall turnover in the field.
- **High Potential Opportunity (HPO) schemes led by Department for International Trade to boost FDI:**
 - Birmingham and Solihull Data Driven Healthcare & Technologies.
 - Coventry and Warwickshire Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Modelling and Simulation.
 - Warwickshire 'Silicon Spa' Games Development.

- **A young and diverse population:** a population of just under 3m across the 7 constituent Local Authorities – one of the youngest and most diverse areas of the country (34% of people in the region are 24 and younger, compared to 29% nationally) and the West Midlands is the largest Combined Authority outside of London.
- **Great Connectivity:**
 - Centrally located - 90% of the UK is within four hours of the West Midlands. High Speed Rail 2 will mean you can get from the West Midlands to London in under 38 minutes.
 - Best 5G coverage of any region outside of London nationally, 65% geographic coverage, up from 22% in 2021.
 - High levels of gigabit capable broadband - WMCA Gigabit availability 94% vs UK 79%.



Where are we now?

Since the publication of our last Roadmap we have been delivering projects and programmes across all five mission areas, strengthening and forming partnerships and embedding digital across all of our strategies. Some of our key activities since the last Roadmap include:

Delivering projects and programmes

- We used the Community Renewal Fund to run the [Digital Futures Project](#).
- We have been investing in digital skills - [£15m worth of investments to upskill residents](#).
- We have been improving connectivity – [developed the UK's first 5G enabled tram](#)

Strengthened and formed new partnerships with key stakeholders

- We have [appointed a Tech Commissioner](#) and are working with [Tech West Midlands](#) to help shape our digital economy projects and programmes.
- We are working with companies like [Microsoft to close the skills gap](#).
- We have strengthened our relationship with Government through our membership of the [Digital Infrastructure Leadership Group](#) and our leadership of the Digital Infrastructure Connectivity Acceleration (DCIA) and UK Telecoms Innovation Network (UKTIN) programmes.

Strengthened our strategies

We have further embedded the role of digital in our key strategies:

- [WMCA Deeper Devolution Deal](#)
- [Plan for Growth strategy](#)
- [Local Transport Plan](#)

We have commissioned research and have worked with partners to strengthen our evidence base, this includes commissioning the Young Foundation to complete [Peer to Peer Digital Exclusion Research](#) and contributing to UFI's [Skills for an economy in transition](#) research.

Case Study: WM5G

Access to fast and reliable digital connectivity (fixed + mobile) is critical for all citizens, businesses and public services. From a mobile perspective, 5G is forecast to super-charge the West Midlands economy by around £1.9bn by 2025 according to research by Barclays and the region has been at the forefront of 5G launch, rollout and innovation through WM5G and its partners. But we can only realise these benefits when 5G is available to all citizens, businesses and public services throughout the region. As of April 2023, 5G coverage was available from at least one operator to around 65% of our geography and over 90% population coverage from at least one operator. While this is a strong start and region-leading, thanks to WM5G and WMCA Local Authorities work with the private sector and government to make it faster and easier to upgrade sites, it's imperative that we continue the work to ensure that the remaining 35% of the West Midlands geography can access 5G and the benefits it can deliver as quickly as possible as well as to enable businesses and public services to generate benefits.

Access to fast and reliable broadband is also critical for all citizens, businesses, and public services. Not only does access to fast and reliable broadband contribute an estimated 2% of GVA of

its own accord, but it also enables social inclusion and supports the delivery of over 20% of GVA created by digital services – across a wide range of sectors including retail, health and social care, education, transport, energy, manufacturing and many others.

Whilst the West Midlands has seen investment in connectivity and has successfully demonstrated the ability to roll out infrastructure, the overall picture for gigabit broadband is inconsistent across the region. Consequently, ensuring the provision of fast and reliable broadband is a critical part of the West Midlands' Plan for Growth and the West Midlands shares the Department for Science Innovation and Technology's mission "to make sure everyone can get faster broadband speeds and reap the benefits of internet-fuelled innovations in the coming decades." Ensuring the accelerated availability of full fibre broadband at key strategic sites is key to this aspiration.



Significant Challenges Across the Region

For this Roadmap update we produced an evidence base report which includes “Scale of the Challenge” analysis to help us understand the gap between the West Midlands and national performance on several key indicators that are linked to the five Digital Roadmap mission areas and which feature in key reports like the techUK’s Local Capital Index report.

Securing access for everyone to digital opportunities, particularly those in poverty

- 46% of the region’s population are non/limited users of the internet, whilst 25% of disabled adults have never used the internet.
- Our region needs 280,000 more people to gain essential digital skills to be in line with the national average.

Sharing and using data to improve people’s lives

- Our region needs 3,700 more businesses to share data to be in line with the best performing region for data sharing.

Becoming the UK’s Best-Connected Region

- We want the region to be in the top decile of gigabit capable broadband access of any UK region – continuing the progress on broadband access.

Realising the potential of digital to transform our economy and build economic resilience

- The West Midlands Digital Sector has a £1.3bn Gross Value Added output gap with the national average.

Using digital public services to build a fairer, greener, healthier region

- Our region has 69,000 fewer adults using digital public services compared to the national average.



Roadmap Missions (2024-2027)

The Digital Roadmap missions and outcomes are designed so they align to the WMCA's Inclusive Growth Framework themes. Doing this means that our work on digital adheres to the Inclusive Growth principle which is “a more deliberate and socially purposeful model of growth, measured not only by how fast or aggressive it is; but also, by how well it is created and shared across the whole population and place, and by the social and environmental outcomes it realises for our people.”

We set out the key strategies, projects and programme and partnerships activities that we are prioritizing across our five mission areas for the next three years. We intend for this Roadmap to be a live document, meaning that we have periodic reviews to track progress and continue to use the evidence base to develop activities.



Digital Roadmap Missions	Digital Roadmap Aspirations	Inclusive Growth Fundamentals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Securing access for everyone to digital opportunities, particularly those in poverty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Everyone has access to an affordable device and connection, and feels confident to access the internet and basic services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Affordable and safe spaces
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Everyone can access digital jobs, particularly young people and those at risk of redundancy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Equality
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The supply of digital skills meets demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Education and Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sharing and using data to improve people's lives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Data is shared effectively across organisations to solve key regional challenges. ● The West Midlands are national leaders on data ethics, open data, and data security. ● Advanced data analytic methods are regularly used to improve public services and grow our economy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Power and Participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Becoming the UK's Best-Connected Region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Best 5G mobile coverage in UK - with at least 40% population coverage by 2025. ● Best 4G mobile coverage in UK – with >95% outdoor and >90% indoor coverage. ● Highest gigabit broadband access with the region achieving its fair share of full fibre broadband investment versus other large urban conurbations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Connected Communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Realising the potential of digital to transform our economy and build economic resilience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All SMEs and micro business adopt basic digital technologies to boost output and productivity. ● Firms across the regional economy adopt advanced digital technologies (e.g. AI, blockchain, VR/AR, 5G, IoT). ● Tech and digital firms that are looking to scale up can access support and finance in the region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inclusive Economy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Using digital public services to build a fairer, greener, healthier region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regional carbon reduction as outlined in the WM2041 net zero strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Climate Resilience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduction in the health inequalities by ensuring that vulnerable adults and those with multiple and complex needs are provided humancentred support to improve their wellbeing. ● The WMCA and other regional organisations should work to increase citizen engagement via digital portals and platforms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Health and Wellbeing



Mission 1: Securing access for everyone to digital opportunities, particularly those in poverty

Over the next three years we want to reduce digital exclusion and upskill residents in an effort to support greater social mobility.

Outlook

In recent years the region has improved its performance on digital skills and the area is now ranked 19th out of 41 areas on the Tech UK Local Capital Index. Digital exclusion does remain a challenge though with 8% of the region’s adults being classed as digitally excluded based on their inability to complete foundational digital tasks, compared to 4% nationally.

The region does have some key strengths and opportunities which can help us to address the outlook for digital exclusion and skills, these include:

WMCA’s ability to tailor provision to the needs of the region on both digital inclusion and skills through its Skills Investment Fund.

The ability of Local Authorities and the community and voluntary sector to provide evidence that can be used to shape policy and delivery of inclusion initiatives; and

The potential of social tariffs to drive uptake of broadband in poorer households.

We will use these and other mechanisms to support the achievement of our objectives in the next three years.

Regional Challenges

- Our region has 92,000 more residents that are unable to complete foundational digital tasks compared to the national average.
- Our region needs 280,000 more people to gain essential digital skills to be line with the national average.

Linked Inclusive Growth Fundamentals

- Affordable and safe spaces
- Equality
- Education and Learning

Key Partners

- Local Authorities
- Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations
- Central Government

WMCA Funding Investment

- Inclusive of £4m secured through the Deeper Devolution Deal and £2m of WMCA Skills Investment Funding.

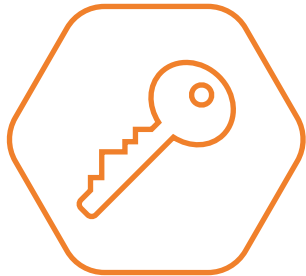
Roadmap activities

Regional Aspirations

Everyone can access digital jobs, particularly young people and those at risk of redundancy.

The supply of digital skills meets demand.

Everyone has access to an affordable device and connection, and feels confident to access the internet and basic services.



The WMCA will work with will work with partners to tackle digital exclusion and improve social mobility:

- **Connected Services Programme** - £4m secured through Deeper Devolution Deal to support 20,000 residents that experience and/or at risk of experiencing digital exclusion to access data and devices.
- **Social tariffs:** We will ensure that our digital inclusion work (e.g. our social tariff campaign) is targeting those households that do not have access to the internet to get more people online. Where possible we will work with partners to promote the use of GP digital services specifically to aid uptake.
- **Data Banks** – Work with partners in the region to improve access to data banks for residents.
- **Digital Divide Funding** – £2m for Voluntary and Community Sector organisations to provide a service that engages, stabilizes, and progresses those that are digitally excluded, connecting them with formal progression routes.
- **Digital Curriculum** – with the Good Things Foundation developed a guide to help providers to better understand the barriers residents face to getting online.

Improving digital skills

- Work to increase the proportion of digital skills delivery from 8% to 20% via revised curriculum approach.
- Continue to fund digital bootcamps to help industry access talent.
- Engage with West Midlands companies to help shape how WMCA skills provision is delivered to help increase the number of people with work digital skills.
- **Careers service** – use new place-based governance arrangements for careers gained through the Deeper Devolution Deal to shape regional and national policies and programmes that are developed to improve digital skills, including for young people.
- **Transport Skills Academy** – we are actively encouraging young people to take an active part in understanding job roles and services we offer that relate to data and digital through our Transport Skills Academy.
- **Youth Engagement Platform** - Use the WMCA youth engagement platform to provide more information to young people about routes to improving digital skills and gaining employment in digital and tech related roles.

Case Study: Connected Services Programme

The Connected Services Programme is being funded by £4m secured through the Deeper Devolution Deal. The project is supporting 20,000 residents directly with data enabled devices and training but will have a greater impact across families of those supported – anticipated benefits reaching 100,000 residents.

The project uses a place-based targeted approach focusing on those areas identified within the Digital Exclusion Risk Index cross referenced against WMCA's own digital exclusion map.

The project will improve IT accessibility, close the digital divide, and help the most disadvantaged communities get online. Targeting those at the highest risk of digital exclusion, the WMCA will work with local authorities and community partners to help residents improve their access to public services, increase their employment chances by learning digital skills and reduce isolation among vulnerable members of society.

The anticipated benefits of the project include:

- Greater resilience to cost of living pressures - shopping and paying bills on-line can result in substantial cost savings
 - Improved access to public services such as welfare, health, council services – alongside potential reductions in the cost of providing these services. Research shows a £6.40 return on investment for every £1 invested in digital health inclusion.
 - Reduction in isolation of older and other vulnerable people including those with disabilities, through greater connection with family and friends, and with essential services.
 - Improved access to employment for residents, through increased confidence to gain skills, look for work online, and secure employment.
 - Stronger employment and earnings progression for residents. Manual workers with essential digital skills can earn £2,160 more per year compared to those without these skills (Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2020).
- Improved productivity among businesses, through effective utilisation of employees' digital skills.





Mission 2: Sharing and using data to improve people's lives

In the coming years we want to use technologies to capture and share data in more effective ways, support behaviour changes through scenario modelling and play a key role in continuing to improve data ethics in the region. This supports our ambitions to become nationally recognised for our work on data, although we recognise that we need to increase our regional capacity to enable this.

Outlook

The use and sharing of data are key enablers of what we do across the Roadmap missions because it helps us to understand the region and to make evidence-based decisions.

Our evidence report uses Annual Business Survey data to show the rate of which data is being acquired and shared across the region by businesses, in line with Tech UK analysis. The data shows that the region performs better than the national average on data acquisition, which is the % of businesses that 'acquires or collects any data (34% compared to 29% nationally). The region also marginally outperforms the national average on the % of businesses that share data at 17% compared to 16% nationally, for context Greater London is the best performing area on this measure with 21%.

Our ambition for data use and sharing means that we will work to improve position on these measures and use of these indicators to help shape the actions that we will take over the next three years to achieve our aims.

Regional Challenges

- Our region needs 3,700 more businesses to share data to be in line with the best performing region for data sharing.

Linked Inclusive Growth Fundamentals

- Power and participation

Key Partners

- Regional statutory agencies
- Academia
- Technology companies

WMCA Investment

- Activities to be delivered as part WMCA core funded activities and in-kind support from external partners.

Roadmap activities

Regional Aspirations

The West Midlands is a national leader on data ethics, open data, and data security.

Advanced data analytic methods are regularly used to improve public services and grow our economy.

Data is shared effectively across organisations to solve key regional challenges.



Partnership working, publishing and sharing datasets will be at the forefront of our efforts to share more data in the region:

- **Governance** - improve regional governance forums to enable more coordinated discussions and partnership work and implement data partnership with Government as part of the Deeper Devolution Deal.
- **Collaborative projects:**
 - identify a series of areas for collaborative data projects that showcase the value of data utilization and inform evidence based decision making and make the case for further data focused initiatives.
 - Seek to work with other Combined Authorities, Tech UK, Local Authorities and other partners to access more digital related intelligence to inform our understanding of our places.
- **Research and insights** - published online to make data more accessible to the public and other private and public sector organisations.

We will continue our drive to become leaders in national data ethics, open data and security through:

- Data Strategy - Develop and then use our data strategy to further maximize how we use data as a Combined Authority.
- Business Growth West Midlands - understand what support businesses need to enable them to acquire and share data to stimulate growth opportunities associated with data ethics, open data, and data security, e.g., opportunities related to cyber.

Our work to grow the economy and improve public services will see us do the following:

- **Drones** - will fly over congested hotspots and traffic queues at accident scenes or road closures and send live footage to transport managers enabling them to better plan diversions and keep the public informed.



- **Digital Twins:**
 - Energy - improve decision-making on energy infrastructure by bringing together key stakeholders and relevant datasets in a virtual environment.
 - Regional Strategic Model / Digital Twin - update the WMCA's existing strategic transport modelling and will support traditional transport planning activity by already accomplished transport modellers.
- **Data literacy:**
 - Up-skilling and improving the capacity and capability of our digital, data and technology (DDaT), data experts, operational research, social science and research and intelligence professionals; and wider training of data users: training and engagement of members, senior officers, policy officers and strategic stakeholders.
 - Share training and development opportunities enhanced and shared through regional forums.
- **Symposium** – WMCA will convene a symposium with the relevant government departments and agencies to leverage the benefits of data science capability to local policymaking and service delivery. This is part of wider package of data benefits secured through the Deeper Devolution deal.
- **Regional Transport Coordination Centre (RTCC)** - use the data collected through the RTCC and transport sources such as sensors, manual counting, commercial data from vehicles and mobile phone data to shape the information we provide to the public, key partner organisations and politicians. Here, we are using frequently updated short-term forecasts that support users making operational decisions in real time

Case Study: Transport for West Midlands Drones

The Regional Transport Coordination Centre and Safer Travel Command Centre, based in Birmingham, receive images from more than 2,500 fixed CCTV cameras covering the West Midlands major road, rail and tram networks, as well as some town and city centres. But there are gaps in the coverage, meaning they are unable to view traffic building up around some incidents. Now, thanks to the new drone team, live images can be relayed back to the command centre filling those gaps in coverage, at a fraction of the cost of installing and maintaining static CCTV cameras.

It not only means that traffic can be better managed around incidents, but more accurate and timely advice can be given to the travelling public – including via the @WMroads social media channels.

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands and WMCA Chair, said:

“Our Regional Transport Coordination Centre has been at the forefront of innovation in transport management - playing a major role in the success of last summer’s spectacular Commonwealth Games. Now we’re building on the existing provision of hundreds of CCTV cameras covering our road, rail and tram networks by bringing drone technology into our repertoire to further improve coverage. Having a wider aerial view of various scenarios that can be beamed back to the RTCC will enable our traffic managers to make better and faster decisions about how best to deal with incidents – enhancing the travel experience for local people right across our region.”

A drone has also been deployed during Aston Villa matches to spot traffic issues and allow up-to-date information to be sent out via social media channels. Those drone images are shared with Birmingham City Council and West Midlands Police. The live panoramic overview provided by the drones is already making a difference in how congestion at junctions is managed and minimized. And the team is also set to trial an automated drone which would be launched from the roof of Walsall Bus Station in collaboration with drone safety specialists [Skybound Rescuer](#). It would be the first urban trial of a remote operated drone system in the UK.





Mission 3: Becoming the UK's best-connected region

We are working with a range of partners to improve the region's broadband and mobile infrastructure. Although the outputs are focused on infrastructure it is key to note that intelligence gathering and sharing and stakeholder engagement are key to the success of this mission.

Outlook

WM5G, the subsidiary of the WMCA leading digital connectivity, has developed a proven model for working in partnership with Local Authorities, telecoms network providers and Government to implement processes and new ways of working that make it simpler, faster and cheaper to deploy connectivity infrastructure – in compliance with regulations.

As a result network providers have invested more money in the West Midlands 5G network than other comparable regions. This resulted in more citizens, businesses and public services having access to 5G – pulling forward over £100 million GVA of estimated benefits over 5 years.

It's imperative that we continue this work to ensure that all citizens, businesses and public services can access the benefits of 5G and also

that we extend this approach to broadband, where the region faces similar challenges.

Regional Challenges

- We want the region to be in the top decile of gigabit capable broadband access of any UK region.

Linked Inclusive Growth Fundamentals

- Improving accessibility of resources and opportunities

Key Partners

- Central Government
- Local Government
- Local Industry
- Private Sector

WMCA Investment

- Inclusive of £10m secured through the Deeper Devolution Deal for the Smart Cities Region and £4m secured through the 5G Innovation region programme.

Roadmap activities

Regional Aspirations

Best 5G mobile coverage of any CA region - with at least 40% population coverage by 2025.

Best 4G mobile coverage in UK – with >95% outdoor and >90% indoor coverage.

Highest gigabit broadband access with the region achieving its fair share of full fibre broadband investment versus other large urban conurbations.



WM5G are the lead agency for mission 3 activities and they will lead the work on improving mobile and broadband:

- **Collaborating with Government:**
 - identify key policy changes and engage strategically with DSIT to overcome challenges to drive change at a faster pace across the region.
 - Work proactively with DSIT through the Digital Infrastructure Leadership Group to accelerate broadband roll-out and connectivity.
- **5G Innovation Region** - £4m to accelerate the adoption of 5G technology across the two of the region’s most important clusters – manufacturing and smart communities (which includes social care & social housing) – to boost productivity, wellness and jobs.
- **Strategic Partnerships** – Work with the WMCA and other local partners to create strategic relationships with industry partners that help to take advantage of the Roadmap opportunities identified in the evidence report.
- **Intelligence** - including updating the mobile connectivity map of the region with all new or changed public assets and mobile connectivity assets so that our strategic partners have an update to understanding of regional infrastructure.
- **Digital Forum** – engagement in this forum will foster partnership working between the WMCA, WM5G, Local Authorities and other partners when rolling out new technology. WM5G will also disseminate the latest best practice guidance (including Digital Connectivity Infrastructure Accelerator phase 1), review progress and address any escalations.
- **Barrier Busting** - work with Local Authorities and operators to identify new barrier busting interventions to resolve connectivity issues. WM5G will also develop and launch broadband barrier busting best practice guidance and improvement plan with the seven West Midlands Local Authorities, Government and private sector.

- **Capacity** – work to increase the capacity of WM5G, this will include identifying ways of working more closely with our partners and recruiting specialists to lead on key areas of work, including broadband.
- **Analogue switch off** – develop plans to support residents and business understand plan for the implications of the analogue switch off that is planned for 2025.
- **Projects and programmes** – continuing to trial and test to innovate across the region, including through the Smart Cities work that is referenced under mission 5.



Case Study: Fast Track Legal Process

WM5G have developed the Fast Track legal process, meaning the processes of site selection, legal and Town and Country planning are managed centrally by us.



This enables Industry to engage with a common interface across the whole of the WMCA region which has improved relationships across the whole ecosystem. As a result, the time to deploy new mobile sites in the region has reduced from 18 months to 6 months with the legal process alone reducing from 12 months to 6 weeks. The process has had 92 sites pass through it and the benefits can clearly be seen in the coverage figures for the region. MNO's suffer less not-spots as sites churn because replacement sites can be delivered far sooner. Extra network capacity can be deployed faster which maintains user experience.

WM5G have taken these learnings and extended it to the deployment of small cells. Through the Digital Connectivity Infrastructure Accelerator project and the relationships with industry, WM5G has enabled Birmingham to create and sign an Open Access agreement in record time, allowing industry to be able deploy telecoms equipment on street furniture in the region with ease which saw VMO2 install their first small cells in the city centre in the last 2 weeks. This will further help to ensure people in the region are always connected when on the move.



Mission 4: Realising the potential of digital to transform our economy and build economic resilience

Over the next three years we will use the region's business support provision to provide firms with specific support at the different stages of their journeys, in addition to supporting them to access market opportunities and help firms to adopt technology to grow.

Outlook

The West Midlands has the second largest Tech sector outside of London, generating £15bn to the wider regional economy, with 2,400 businesses employing 144,000 people. The evidence reviewed shows that this growth is driven by the ability of the region to attract business in key sectors and clusters such as advanced manufacturing, healthtech, medtech and fintech.

Tech UK's Local Capital Index shows that digital adoption is another key driver with the region going up 2 places to 22nd on digital adoption. Regional initiatives like Made Smarter are making a significant difference to adoption in the manufacturing industry.

An increasingly important facet to adoption is the utilisation of AI and we are aware of the need to support our business base in further understanding how AI and DeepTech adoption more broadly can drive growth.

Regional Aspirations

- All SMEs and micro business adopt basic digital technologies to boost output and productivity.
- Firms across the regional economy adopt advanced digital technologies (e.g. AI, blockchain, VR/AR, 5G, IoT).
- Tech and digital firms that are looking to scale up can access support and finance in the region.

Regional Challenges

- The West Midlands Digital Sector has a £1.3bn Gross Value Added output gap compared to the national average.

Linked Inclusive Growth Fundamentals

- Reducing employment inequalities
- Increasing household income

Key Partners

- Tech WM
- Private Sector
- Central Government
- Academia
- West Midlands Growth Company

WMCA Investment

- £1m worth of Digital Economy activities will be generated by Tech WM with every £1 of WMCA investment multiplying into £2 of private sector funding. Additional activities are being funded via core WMCA programmes, e.g. £14.7m work of skills funding.

Introduction by Martin Ward, Tech Commissioner



As Tech Commissioner for the West Midlands, I am excited to introduce the range of activities that reflects our commitment to harnessing the tremendous potential of the digital and tech sector in our region which is worth more than the £15bn.

Our region is home to world-class universities, innovative start-ups, and established businesses driving digital success. We have an incredible talent pool that continues to grow, attracting skilled individuals from across the globe. The scale of the West Midlands tech and digital sector is truly impressive, and we should be proud of what we have achieved so far. But it is not just the size and scale of our digital sector that makes the West Midlands special. Our region possesses unique strengths that set us apart. For instance, we have a long history of manufacturing excellence, and we are now translating that expertise into the digital space. We have seen companies leverage advanced manufacturing techniques combined with cutting-edge digital technologies, creating transformative solutions in industries like automotive to healthcare, and everything in between.

Furthermore, our region benefits from improving connectivity, thanks to state-of-the-art infrastructure such as 5G networks and full-fiber

broadband. This connectivity accelerates the adoption of emerging technologies and provides the foundation for digital innovation across industries. It empowers businesses, strengthens public services, and enhances the overall quality of life for our citizens.

However, we also recognize that there are challenges to be addressed and obstacles to overcome, including: a fragmented ecosystem; a need to improve high growth support; a purpose to unify the ecosystem and the need to improve our visibility and have our narrative understood. Together with partners, we will overcome these challenges and create an ecosystem that nurtures and supports entrepreneurs, provides a platform for start-ups to scale, and attracts investment from around the world.

Through collaboration and tenacious efforts, we will establish the West Midlands as a frontrunner in the digital era, creating a prosperous and inclusive future for all.

Tech WM, alongside the Tech Commissioner, Martin Ward, have played a leading role in developing the programme for Mission 4. TechWM is a not-for-profit organisation who act as the independent voice of the West Midlands tech sector. Since its inception in 2019, the organisation has worked tirelessly to support the region's tech ecosystem and grow the digital economy.

TechWM has set out an ambitious plan to ensure the region's tech sector is at the forefront of the new technological revolution and is truly seen as a global tech superpower. The plans are designed to address three specific issues that emerged:

1. A fragmented ecosystem that's hard to navigate
2. Absence of a strong narrative and shared purpose
3. A limited access to high-quality business support and investment opportunities

Announced at Birmingham Tech Week 2023, TechWM will invest £1m over 2024 in a number of key initiatives that centre on their Connect/Amplify/Transform strategy.

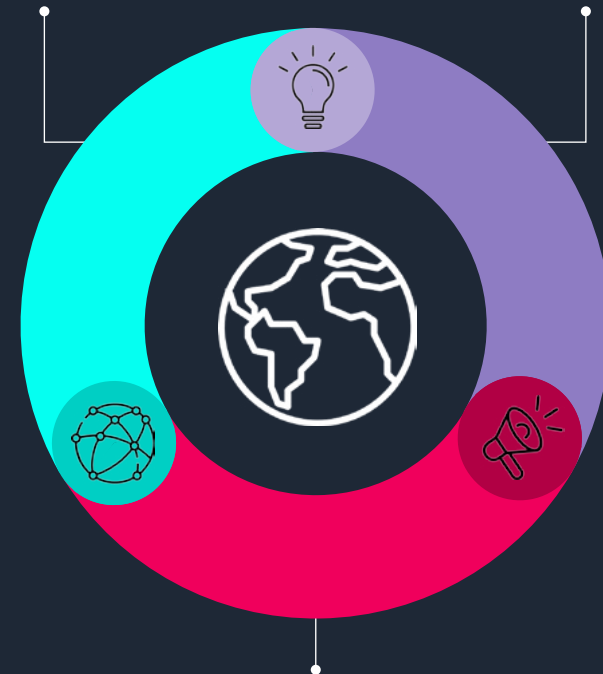
This investment and strategy will be delivered in partnership with public, private and academic stakeholders through a close working relationship with WMCA.

OUR MODEL

designed to address the challenges and help the region realise its full potential as a global tech hub

CONNECT

TRANSFORM



AMPLIFY



Connect

The Connect element of the strategy, named 'TechConnect' will focus on 4 P's: Place, People, Platform and Programme.

- **TechConnect Hubs:** The place part of TechConnect is a series of physical spaces across the West Midlands where businesses can get support and work in an environment alongside their peers. This includes a Hub in partnership with Bruntwood Sci-Tech at their Innovation Birmingham campus and a Hub at 1 Mill Street in Leamington Spa.
- **TechConnect Support:** The people part of TechConnect is an expert team with over 40 years combined experience in helping tech companies scale. This team, consisting of experts in support, innovation, investment and talent, will be on hand to support businesses and signpost them to relevant parts of the ecosystem.
- **TechConnect Platform:** The platform part of TechConnect is a SaaS solution designed with businesses in mind. It will capture information about an organisation and then provide real-time and contextually relevant recommendations. It will also provide a real-time map of the ecosystem so everyone has a good understanding of the sector.
- **TechConnect Live:** The programme element of TechConnect is a series of events, workshops and forums that will give entrepreneurs and businesses access to unique insight, experts and mentors. This includes activity with the University of Warwick, Aston University, HSBC, Accenture and Gowling WLG, to name a few.



Amplify

The Amplify part of our strategy is designed to ensure the region's tech sector and businesses get the recognition they deserve. This consists of 3 key components:

- **Narrative & Proposition Development:** To ensure the region has a strong, inspiring and compelling story, TechWM will commission an agency to develop a narrative and proposition for the West Midlands tech sector. This will be developed by engaging with, and capturing insight from, partners, collaborators and stakeholders. The outputs from the initiative will be:
 - **A Storybook:** A visually engaging document that clearly articulates our region's past, present and future. It will demonstrate our strengths and showcase our key businesses and assets.
 - **A Video:** A video will be produced to bring the story to life in an engaging and exciting way.
 - **An Asset Library:** A set of assets will be produced including case studies, reports, quotes and stats that can be used to demonstrate the tech sector's capabilities.

All of these outputs will be shared and made readily available to everyone in the ecosystem so the region has a consistent narrative.

- **Showcase Events:** In order to promote the tech sector to a national and international audience we will continue to put on our two key events:
 - **Birmingham Tech Week:** The UK's largest regional tech festival attracts 7,500 people, including investors, delegations from over 25 countries, ministers, public figures and execs from the likes of Microsoft, Google and Amazon.
 - **West Midlands Tech Review:** The annual tech review, now in its 3rd year, brings together partners, collaborators and stakeholders from across the region so everyone is aligned around shared strategic initiatives and goals. It takes a look at the previous year and looks at the year ahead. 300+ senior tech leaders will be in attendance.

- **PR, Marketing, Media and Social:** Ongoing promotional activity will be delivered to ensure there's a constant stream of news across a multitude of channels. This includes a purpose-built website which will act as the 'shop window' for the region's tech sector.



Transform

The final part of the plan, ‘Transform,’ will take a deep dive into the ecosystem and understand what’s working, what’s not and what’s missing. Where needed, policy recommendations will be made and investment cases will be formed so interventions can be made.

Overseeing this part of the plan will be an independent Tech & Digital Advisory Board who will make strategic recommendations, create business cases and will be responsible for the region’s Tech & Digital Strategy. This Board is Chaired by Martin Ward, the West Midlands Tech Commissioner and consists of industry experts, including Janet Coyle CBE, Lord Kulveer Ranger of Northwood and Paul Faulkner. The Board includes experts from across the ecosystem, including people from the public, private, academic and third sectors.

The Transform part of the plan will focus on how we can create more tech scaleups and unicorns by addressing 3 key growth drivers:

1. **Business Support** - creating a world-class ecosystem of business support designed for high-growth tech businesses

2. **Investment & Funding** - Addressing funding gaps and investment readiness, especially around early-stage startups (Pre-Seed and Seed)
3. **Digital Skills & Talent** - A focus on narrowing the region’s digital skills gap so businesses have the necessary talent they need to grow.

Each one of these areas will have a dedicated Special Interest Group (SIG), Chaired by an expert alongside a number of knowledgeable subject matter experts. The objective of these groups will be to make recommendations to TechWM, WMCA and the Tech & Digital Advisory Board for activation and delivery through regional partners.

Alongside these core SIGs, a number of focussed groups will be formed, these include:

- **AI & Future Tech:** Launching in March 2024 - Chaired by Dr Chris Meah, Founder of School of Code and Co-Chaired by Professor Andrew Pardoe, Head of the DeepTech Centre at the University of Warwick.
- Other groups being planned include Cyber, Women in Tech, CreaTech, 5G/Telco and other key verticals across the tech sector.

All investments and initiatives are co-supported by WMCA through a variety of funding sources including core funding, shared prosperity fund and the Innovation Accelerator funded West Midlands Innovation Programme.



The West Midlands Growth Company



The West Midlands Growth Company (WMGC) will also deliver key activities across Mission 4. WMGC is the official investment promotion agency for the region, with the mission of attracting investment, businesses and visitors to the West Midlands. WMGC is also an accredited Local Visitor Economy Partnership.

Investment support for tech-led businesses

WMGC provides tech-led organisations with support through sector-focused account management:

- **Comprehensive market entry support package** - This includes property agents, recruitment consultants, in addition to insights, research and benchmarking against other UK regions.
- **Strategic Relationship Management** – WMGC disseminates timely insights to relevant stakeholders, enabling appropriate interventions to support the growth and retention of key firms within the region.
- **Global Growth Programme** – A comprehensive package of free market entry support. This includes desk space, UK company establishment, an official address in

the region and on-site account management and networking opportunities.

- **West Midlands Innovation Accelerator** - Designed to turbocharge the region’s research and development capability. It includes the West Midlands Health Tech Innovation Accelerator – driving new healthcare technologies towards commercialisation – and the Digital Innovation Transformative Change Accelerator, bolstering innovation by providing tech firms with funding for trials.
- **The Digital Visitor Information Network** - The Digital Visitor Information Network enables WMGC to offer a comprehensive listing of events, performances, exhibitions and festivals to visitors.
- **Fully-funded export support** – A unique collaboration with London & Partners will see ten West Midlands tech scale-ups receive places on its prestigious export programme. The businesses will receive a range of benefits to drive their overseas expansion.
- **Perception change** – WMGC’s tech-focused marcomms campaigns, “The Tech That Makes Tomorrow Work” and “Scale Up in the West Midlands” will profile the region as

a world-class destination for ambitious tech companies to drive innovation and grow.

Driving tech-led investment

During its “Global West Midlands” event at Birmingham Tech Week, WMGC announced a jobs boost of over 1,000 roles into the region from five innovation focused companies – Version 1, Petalite, Novocomms Group, Aubay and Primacy. Two further examples of supporting tech firms to expand include:

- **Goldilock** - Canadian cybersecurity firm, expanded in Wolverhampton to accommodate its growth strategy. The WMGC kept Goldilock connected to significant tech events taking place in the region, creating valuable networking opportunities and allowing them to amplify their voice within the region’s booming tech marketplace.
- **Tata Technologies** - The business expanded at its state-of-the-art European Headquarters in Leamington Spa, creating 350 skilled roles. The firm also established new Centres of Excellence in partnership with the University of Warwick and University of Wolverhampton, helping local people to fast-track their careers in the mobility industry, while diversifying the workforce.

Supplementary Activities

- **Plan for Growth** - work to understand emerging digital opportunities and challenges for the clusters. This will include:
 - explore how the Roadmap can strengthen connections between industry and academia to develop and apply new digital approaches quickly, sparking growth in nascent clusters like EdTech.
 - use of WMCA Co-Invest Fund and digital workspaces to meet the digital needs of priority and nascent clusters.
 - working with skills leads to support the investment in advanced engineering and digital skills to help workers progress to higher-skilled roles and increase resilience of the cluster.
 - support the work to further public and private investment around the Digbeth Loc project and opportunities with the Digital Catapult on immersive technology.
- **WMCA Digital Skills training investment:** More than £14.7 million is being invested by the WMCA in bespoke training schemes designed to help meet the skills need generated by the region's booming tech sector.
- **Talent for Skills** - WM5G, as part of the UK Telecoms Innovation Network (UKTIN) launched the Talent Advisory Group for skills, Clusters Network for UK regions and a UKTIN adoption programme focusing on health, transport, agritech and smart communities.
- **Exploratory activities on Deep Tech (including AI):**
 - The potential for developing a West Midlands Ethical framework for AI and deep tech.
 - Working with HE, FE and industry to create courses that focus on AI and deep tech that respond to industry needs.
 - Forecasting job creation and GVA impact of Deep Tech across our sectors.
 - Work with key partners such as the [Digital Catapult](#) to explore areas for collaboration that could see businesses supported to adopt technologies, in particular Deep Tech.
- **WM5G SME Adoption programme** – supporting over 700 SMEs to raise awareness, engagement and support for digital transformation covering 5G, internet of things and data/AI opportunities with 98% very likely to action some of the learnings from the programme.
- **DIATOMIC (Digital InnovAtion TransfOrMatIve Change)** - will accelerate place-based innovation in the West Midlands. Harnessing the region's existing international relationships and through a series of targeted initiatives, it will focus on growing the region's clean tech, health tech and med tech markets.
- **Made Smarter adoption programme** – supporting SMEs in the manufacturing sector to raise awareness of Industry 4.0 adoption benefits and support planning.
- **Business Growth West Midlands** - Single location for all business enquiries, using LA account managers to signpost businesses to the most relevant support.
- **Sector Engagement**
 - Working with the West Midlands Growth Company to engage with major digital employers and potential investors, outlining the scale of digital opportunities and potential for growth in the region.
 - Promoting the region through key events such as Birmingham Tech Week to enable innovative firms to showcase their companies.

Case Study: Credicar

Credicar is a pioneering financial technology (fintech) company that has revolutionized the world of automotive financing. The company is one of many that are supported through SuperTechWM. The company was founded by a team of finance and technology experts who recognized the need for a more efficient and user-friendly way of obtaining car financing. Their vision was to create a platform that would empower individuals to secure vehicle loans easily, transparently, and at competitive rates. The founders aimed to disrupt the traditional lending landscape by utilizing advanced technology and data-driven decision-making.

Credicar's groundbreaking platform is built upon sophisticated algorithms and machine learning capabilities. Through extensive data analysis and risk assessment, the platform evaluates loan applications swiftly and accurately. By leveraging advanced quantitative models, Credicar assesses borrower creditworthiness based on various parameters such as credit history, income stability, and employment status. Moreover, the company capitalizes on AI to streamline the application and approval process. An intuitive user interface allows applicants to swiftly navigate the platform, providing necessary

financial information and documentation. The AI-powered algorithms analyze these inputs, enabling Credicar to determine loan eligibility and present tailored financing options to customers in real-time.

Amar Rana, the CEO and Founder of Credicar, "We founded Credicar on the principle of empowering individuals by simplifying the car loan process. Our advanced technology enables us to offer unparalleled convenience and transparency to consumers, making their car financing journey seamless. We are committed to leveraging cutting-edge solutions to reshape the industry and provide accessible financing options for all."

Credicar's innovative approach has deeply resonated with car buyers, resulting in rapid growth and market expansion. By embracing technology and leveraging data insights, Credicar has successfully minimized the time and effort required to obtain car loans while ensuring competitive interest rates. As a result, a significant number of customers who were previously underserved by traditional financing institutions have now gained access to affordable and flexible credit options.

The company is poised to continue its upward trajectory in transforming how individuals access automotive finance. With ongoing collaboration and support from SuperTechWM, Credicar remains committed to incorporating emerging technologies, refining its platform, and expanding its market reach, solidifying its place as a trailblazing fintech company.





Mission 5: Using digital public services to build a fairer, greener, healthier region

Our work on digital public services is focused on using platforms and data to influence behavior change, using technology to share and dispense information to shape services and running programmes which encourage our residents to become more informed and healthier.

Outlook

Intelligence reviewed for mission 5 emphasises the important role of digital public services in creating a fairer, greener and healthier society. The latest statistics show that 47% of West Midlands residents are accessing these services online, below the national average of 50% and 14 percentage points below London which is the best performing region. Improving this position is a key priority for the region given the benefits that accessing digital public services can bring, including the potential to help reduce the number of journeys made, thus reducing the region's carbon footprint.

Our work in this area will focus on enabling our residents to access public services and as such it will be delivered in conjunction with our digital inclusion and skills work as part of Mission 1.

Regional Challenges

- Our region has 69,000 fewer adults using digital public services compared to the national average.

Links to Inclusive Fundamentals

- Climate Resilience
- Health and Wellbeing

Partners

- NHS
- Technology companies
- Local Authorities

WMCA Funding

- Inclusive of £10m secured through the Deeper Devolution Deal for the Smart City Region and £25k from the Connected Services programme.

Designated Roadmap Activities

Regional Aspirations

Reduction in the health inequalities by ensuring that vulnerable adults and those with multiple and complex needs are provided humancentred support to improve their wellbeing.

The WMCA and other regional organisations should work to increase citizen engagement via digital portals and platforms.

Regional carbon reduction as outlined in the WM2041 net zero strategy.



Health and Communities:

- We will deliver specific activities to improve public services and increase the awareness of digital public services:
 - **Smart Cities** - the three regional Integrated Care Boards to roll-out / enhance successful health & social care pilots based on digital connectivity (home remote monitoring, remote diagnostics, digital prevention, exemplar smart hospital) between now and March 2025.
 - **AI and Healthcare** – work with GPs / primary care to take cardiovascular data, particularly relating to hypertension, and create a tool to enhance identification and management of patients, improving workforce productivity and clinical outcomes.
 - **Connected Services Programme (Health)** - £25k capital funding (part of the wider £4m Connected Services Programme) for digital health devices, helping to support behaviour change for health improvements.
- Work with the NHS and other organisations to understand which areas in the region have low take up of digital public services to inform our place based work to increase usage, for example understanding the neighbourhoods where there is low take up of digital GP services.
- Once published, use the updated WMCA Health of the Region report to identify further support our understanding of the places across the region that should be targeted for greater use of public services to aid health outcomes.
- **Social connectivity tariffs** - Development of materials to help raise awareness of social tariffs amongst key communities via existing channels – including Local Authorities, charities, Combined Authority, operators and others.
- **Work with partners** to ensure that digital is enabling our approach to having a Health in All Policies approach in our work to supporting residents, including developing tailored activities for those facing long term barriers, e.g. disabled people who are significantly less likely than non-disabled people to have internet access (65% compared to 88%).



Transport:

- **Influencing Transport Lab** - facilitate and action collaboration in the behaviour change field, allowing the transport sector to make faster progress towards a sustainable transport ecosystem.
- **Travel Demand Management Strategies** - use data and digital tools to analyse information about individuals, personas and segmentation and our existing transport capacity, to assess demand and hotspots to provide and apply mitigations.
- **Real Time Information** – continue to use RTI to provide travellers with up to date information and use intelligence garnered from travellers to shape service delivery.
- **Retrofit Data Infrastructure** – Develop a data infrastructure solution, and capacity within Energy Capital to make better use of data from retrofits. This will facilitate new, outcomes-based finance for funding retrofit, and work towards our position for future devolved funding.

Energy and Net Zero:

- **Net Zero & Environment Data Dashboard** - produce the Data Dashboard and publish on WMCA website.
- **Project EQUINOX** – The WMCA are participating in Project EQUINOX, where residents with low-carbon heating can save money on their energy bills by being paid to reduce their energy demand during peak times. Smart metres are required for participation, linking digital inclusion to carbon reductions and bill savings.
- **Local Area Energy Planning:** WMCA are working with partners NGED, Advanced Infrastructure, and Regen to develop the LAEP+ tool and an accompanying governance structure to interface with OFGEMs newly proposed ‘Regional Energy Systems Planner’. This governance structure will be informed by the LAEP+ tool which is a ‘digital twin’ of the energy infrastructure region (currently Black Country, Solihull and Coventry). This platform will help coordinate energy infrastructure projects by highlighting areas of constraint and opportunity, allowing us to make smarter, more informed decisions on where we deliver and invest in our energy infrastructure.

Case Study: Smart City Region

The Smart City Region Health, Care and Connectivity programme (SCR) is focused on scaling-up the technology trials that the West Midlands has successfully pioneered and proven in order to deliver radically more effective and efficient health and social care services and boost productivity. There are five key Spending Objectives covering:

Remote Monitoring - Provide sensor-based remote monitoring services for up to 5,000 adults needing ongoing care. This will improve patient care and reduce admissions / re-admissions to hospitals enhancing the impact of virtual wards and intermediate care.

Diagnostics - Complement existing NHS initiatives and help thousands of citizens to receive faster diagnoses with an initial focus on bowel cancer delivered in home and through innovative mobile units taking advantage of advanced connectivity.

Preventative Healthcare - Complement our Thrive programmes with new digital solutions to include 200k employees across the West Midlands with a focus on improving wellbeing and productivity.

Exemplar Hospital - Launch an exemplar smart hospital in partnership with local teams providing enhanced connectivity that enables the hospital to reach and serve more people.

Learning Network - Provide a Learning Network to support health and care staff to benefit from the scaling and acceleration of the above innovative solutions.

These objectives directly respond to the Government's mission to level up health: faster diagnoses will help reduce the backlog, ongoing remote monitoring will help reduce the burden on hospital and domiciliary care services and an exemplar smart hospital will ensure continued technological advances, continually contributing to improving access to health services and thereby reducing inequalities in access. Furthermore, shifting resources into preventative healthcare will contribute to DLUHC's mission to level up well-being.

Taken together, these will bring up healthy life expectancy (HLE), reducing the HLE gap that is central to DLUHC's mission to level up health. These missions and our proposed response are critical in a climate where high rates of economic inactivity are attributable to poor health and wellbeing. It also aligns strongly with the WMCA Plan for Growth, the three regional Integrated Care Boards and LAs' priorities and national priorities to increase digital inclusion.



Governance and Delivery

Since the publication of our last Roadmap we have strengthened and widened our partnerships with stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary and community sectors to increase the rate of which we deliver across the missions and to utilise sectoral expertise and insights to shape our Roadmap Programme.

Digital Roadmap Steering Group and Advisory Groups

In the next three years our Digital Roadmap Steering Group will provide the strategic leadership for the Roadmap programme, some of the key functions for the Steering Group will include:

- Convene regional and national organisations and senior stakeholders to resolve challenges and build on regional strengths, opportunities and specialisms
- Lobby Central Government to secure additional resources for Digital Roadmap priority areas
- Combine resources to address common challenges across the mission areas.

The Digital Roadmap Steering Group will be supported by several advisory groups that will lead on mission specific activities and be responsible for delivery of mission specific activities. Some of the key functions of these groups will be to:

- To collaborate on delivering mission specific activities, including through providing resources to support delivery.

- Recommend supplementary activities that will complement Roadmap activities to accelerate progress across mission areas.
- Share best practice and experiences with other advisory groups to support delivery of mission areas.

Our governance system will receive senior sponsorship from the WMCA's Executive Director for Strategy, Economy and Net Zero who will chair the Digital Roadmap Steering Group. The Executive Director will lead on engagement with the Mayor for the West Midlands, WMCA Culture and Digital Portfolio holder and other WMCA Executive Directors to ensure the Roadmap is embedded in the WMCA policy ecosystem.

Some of the key actions for us in the coming months include:

- Further enhance our efforts to promote the region, using key industry engagement assets (e.g., WM Growth Company and Business Growth West Midlands) so potential investors understand regional strengths.

- Work with our partners to continually develop and refine the projects and programmes that drive forward our missions. This includes working with Local Authorities and Government to take advantage of emerging opportunities such as the 5G Innovation Regions.
- Continue to work with Government to ensure that resources and relationships gained through the Deeper Devolution Deal are fully maximised – our participation in the Digital Infrastructure Leadership Group will be key to this.
- Garner new strategic partnership with industry partners to take advantage of our regional strengths and tackle the regional challenges outlined.
- Work with leaders that are shaping regional and national approaches to delivering Inclusive Growth to ensure that our work on digital is supporting residents from all protective characteristics as defined by the Equalities Act and be part of the collaborative regional effort to address long term challenges such as designing out homelessness.

WMCA Local Authorities

There are seven constituent Local Authorities that make up the WMCA area:

- Birmingham City Council
- Coventry City Council
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
- Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
- City of Wolverhampton Council.

The seven Local Authorities play an integral role in forming WMCA strategies and are also key delivery partners:

- **Strategy** – regular engagement through digital and other forums with local authority representatives have helped significantly to shape Roadmap priority areas. Furthermore, we will explore the formation of an LA Officer Steering Group to support the delivery of the five Roadmap priorities.
- **Delivery** – Local Authorities are strategic partners on key initiatives such as the £4m Connected Services Programme and steers provided by policy leads have shaped the development of future activity listed in the Roadmap, for example the £2m digital divide funding.

The following are examples of how local authority led projects are aligned to the Roadmap Missions:

- [Fablab Coventry](#) - Coventry City Council, Coventry University and the University of Warwick, along with a number of other partners from both the private and charity sectors have contributed to the creation of FabLab Coventry. The project aims 'to encourage all citizens in Coventry to become more technically skilled, but in an environment that is fun, well equipped, geared for self-paced learning, and open to everyone'. This initiative is aligned to Missions 1 and 4 of the Digital Roadmap.
- [Wolverhampton Digital Inclusion Schemes](#) – City of Wolverhampton Council have three primary schemes that are tackling digital exclusion across the City, they are Wolves Online a device and connectivity lending scheme; the Wolves Tech Aid a device recycling scheme and local delivery of the Connected Services Programme a device gifting scheme to support residents to get online. Overall working with a network of 75 trusted partners, the schemes have provided 3,347 devices and 89,840 gigabit of data (equivalent of 3.5 million hours of data) supporting 7,100 residents to get online and improve digital skills. These initiatives

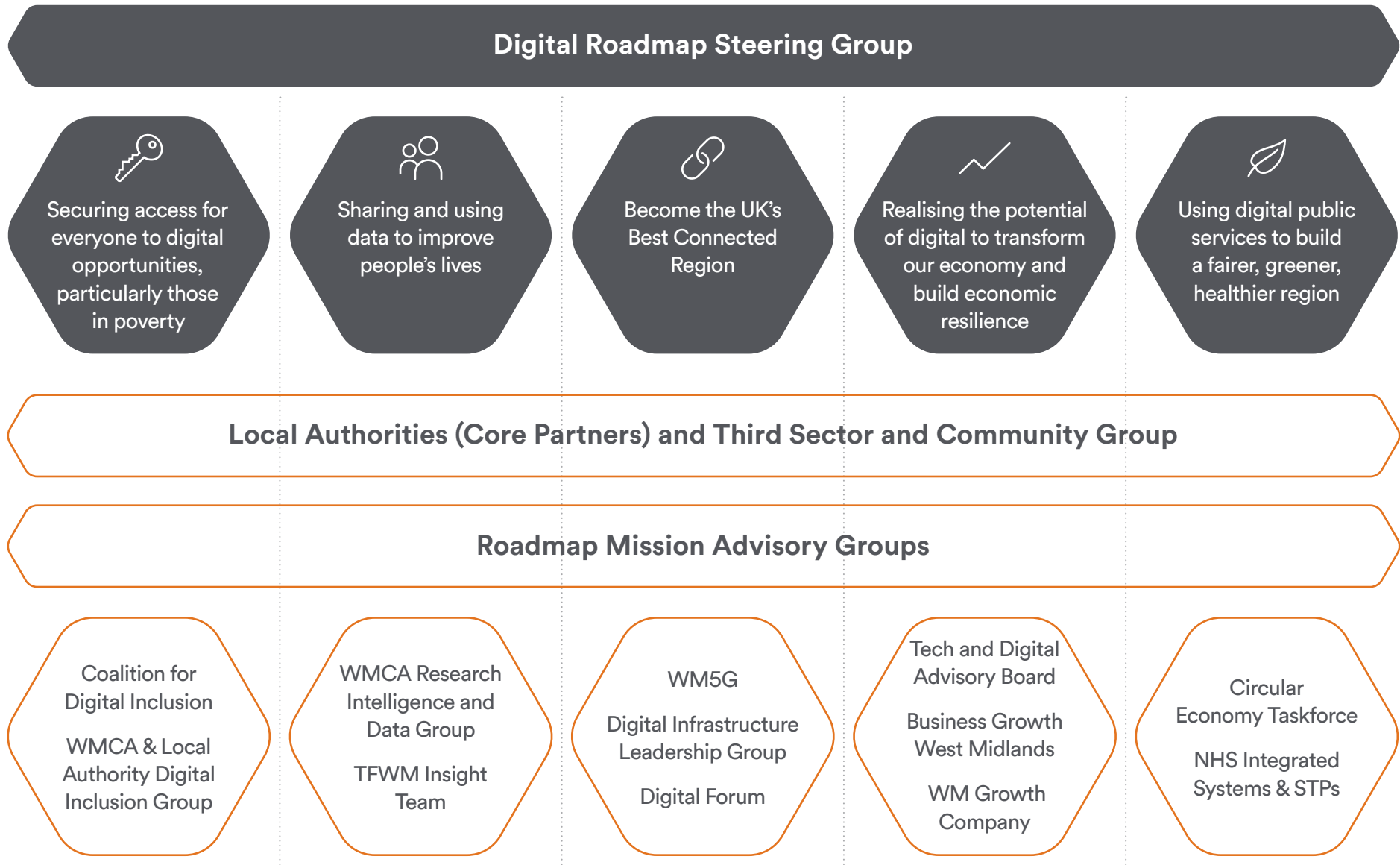
are aligned to Missions 1, 2 and 5 of the Digital Roadmap.

- [Sandwell Digital Den](#) - The Digital Den was a Sandwell based digital inclusion and connectivity project. Led by Greets Green Community Enterprises the project provided access to digital online provision for children, adults and older people including support to get online and improve employment readiness and access to employment opportunities for Sandwell residents. The initiative is aligned to missions 1,3 and 5 of the Digital Roadmap.

Civic leadership also plays a key role in our Roadmap and this document has been endorsed by the seven Council Leaders who sit on our WMCA Board.



Digital Roadmap Governance





West Midlands
Combined Authority

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