UNIVERSITY OF
LIVERPOOL

Heseltine Institute
for Public Policy,
Practice and Place

A MANIFESTO FOR LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

March 2024

Contents

Foreword

Professor Tim Jones, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Liverpool

2024 is set to be a critical year for Liverpool City Region, and for the United Kingdom, with forthcoming local and mayoral elections scheduled for 2nd May and (at the time of writing) a General Election expected before the end of the year. In democratic societies, elections provide citizens with an opportunity to determine the future direction for their communities, and their country. Within this process, universities have a valuable civic role to play: providing contributions to public debate and discourse that can help to highlight, clarify, and advance the most pressing issues of the day.

A Manifesto for Liverpool City Region offers an agenda-setting contribution from the University of Liverpool towards the election debate in 2024. Bringing together expert interventions from across the university and drawing on the strength of our globally leading research, the Manifesto provides an accessible snapshot of the key issues facing our city region and our country. Critically important topics are covered – ranging from net zero ambitions and social care challenges, to advances in AI technology and levels of public trust in our democratic institutions – and the Manifesto considers how these issues can be better understood as well as practically addressed over the coming years.

Led and developed by the Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place – the University of Liverpool's interdisciplinary public policy research institute – the Manifesto contributes to the university's focus on Place and Innovation, a strategic pillar in our Liverpool 2031 Strategy, with a commitment to shaping the development of sustainable and inclusive cities and regions.

Importantly this document reflects, and demonstrates, the University of Liverpool's five core values:

- It is **ambitious**, aiming to meaningfully inform public debate and influence future policy trajectories on crucial issues.

- It is **collaborative**, breaking down silos to bring together perspectives from across the university.

- It is **inclusive**, representing the breadth of different voices, disciplines, and approaches found at the University of Liverpool.

- It is **innovative**, seeking to reframe how we understand key public policy issues, and outline novel approaches to solving society's pressing challenges.

- And it is **responsible**, concerned with promoting better outcomes for our city region, and for the United Kingdom as a whole.

As Vice Chancellor, I am delighted to endorse this Manifesto and hope that the analysis presented within it can help to better inform debate around the coming elections and shape the priorities of those elected.

The University of Liverpool welcomes the opportunity to engage further on these issues, and will work locally – as an employer, investor, and civic leader – in Liverpool City Region to help address them. This work begins with our Liverpool 2031 Strategy, which sets out our ambition to be recognised as a global Top 100 university in time for our 150th anniversary.

With the levels of expertise, originality, and commitment to social impact demonstrated in this document, I am confident that we can meet our ambitions and help to deliver a more flourishing future for Liverpool City Region, and the United Kingdom.

Introduction

Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place

All elections, whether local, national or international in scope, represent something of a crossroads. A turning point where, as a society, we are encouraged to take stock of where we are, and where we want to go. As such, elections are also an opportunity to reaffirm our ambitions, clarify our priorities, and bring new ideas and perspectives to the forefront of political discourse.

Across the world, some **2 billion people** are expected to participate in democratic elections this year. In the United Kingdom, 2024 is set to be a year shaped by a series of national, local, and metro mayoral elections. All of these elections are set to take place amidst a distinctly difficult and challenging context, with the United Kingdom facing an era of **'polycrisis'**, with multiple complex, and interwoven, challenges demanding simultaneous attention.

These challenges are **economic**, with the UK **struggling to find a reliable path to growth** amidst the volatility of the 2008 financial crisis, Brexit, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has upturned international energy markets, further contributing to generational highs in **inflation and a deepening cost of living crisis** for many.

These challenges are **social**, with deep-rooted inequalities continuing to constrain the life chances of disadvantaged groups. Vital public services (including schools and the health and social care system) are facing increased demand amidst severely constrained resources; and the country is facing an acute **housing crisis**. Meanwhile, the rapid advance of new technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), is transforming how people live, work, trade and interact with others.

The challenges are also **environmental**, with an accelerating climate emergency, fuelled by human emissions, already leading to more extreme weather events, and posing a threat to the systems that sustain life on Earth. Despite the scale and urgency of the crisis, progress towards making our industries, homes and transport systems more sustainable is **too slow.**

And the UK is facing distinctly **political** challenges, with the country witnessing an unprecedented period of turnover in national leadership, along with a subsequently high degree of policy churn, which has undermined long-term decision-making. At the same time, democratic norms and institutions appear increasingly under attack, and public trust in the political system appeas in decline.

Crucially, this state of polycrisis can also be felt at the local level in a variety of ways. Whilst Liverpool City Region (LCR) has experienced something of a **renaissance over recent decades**, national challenges threaten to exacerbate a number of the persistent issues **that have been highlighted in recent local strategies:**

- One in three of LCR's neighbourhoods are in the 10% most deprived nationally.
- LCR has too few businesses and jobs to support strong economic performance, and productivity remains consistently below national rates.
- LCR has a high proportion of residents with no qualifications, and a low proportion of residents with at least degree level qualifications.
- LCR has one of the highest economic inactivity rates and lowest employment rates in the country.
- Healthy life expectancy is around two years below national average in LCR, with poor health exacerbated by low quality housing and areas of poor air quality.

These challenges limit opportunity for the 1.6 million people that live in the city region, and act as a brake on Liverpool City Region's contribution to national prosperity. Unlocking the latent potential of places like Liverpool City Region **will be critical** to achieving sustainable and inclusive growth for the UK economy as a whole, as well as addressing the country's stark spatial inequalities. Enabling the adoption, innovation, and diffusion of new technologies throughout local economies **will be central** to achieving this kind of national rebalancing.

Ahead of this year's local, mayoral and general elections, this Manifesto seeks to reframe and advance our understanding of these interconnected crises, and their implications both for Liverpool City Region and the United Kingdom as a whole. Comprising contributions from leading researchers at the University of Liverpool, the Manifesto aims to stimulate debate on the key challenges facing policymakers and highlight innovative ways that they could be addressed.

In this respect, this document can first and foremost be seen as a manifesto *for* Liverpool City Region; situating key issues that are dominating the national political agenda within a local context, and exploring how local opportunities to address these challenges could be realised.

However, this is also a manifesto *from* Liverpool City Region. It suggests how the possibilities of **increased devolution** could be leveraged to develop, and scale, innovative solutions to major national and global challenges such as the cost of living crisis and climate change. Liverpool City Region has a rich heritage of innovation and creative thinking, providing the crucible for advances in industry, science, and technology, as well as political and social reform. It is in this spirit that the Manifesto seeks to outline how Liverpool City Region can again help to lead the way building on the city region's distinctiveness and underlying strengths.

This Manifesto is also a document that showcases the depth and breadth of expertise present at the University of Liverpool. Convened by the **Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place**, the Manifesto demonstrates its unique position at the nexus of research, policy and practice. Anchored in the Liverpool City Region but with links to national and global stakeholders, the Institute is an integral part of the University of Liverpool's contribution to urban debate; bringing together academic expertise from across the University with policymakers and practitioners to support the development of sustainable and inclusive cities and city regions.

The Manifesto combines nine short provocations from University of Liverpool researchers, each addressing a key policy issue:

Professor David Taylor-Robinson and **Professor Louise Kenny** illustrate the stark health inequalities that continue to persist across all six boroughs of Liverpool City Region, and show how a 'lifecourse' approach that seeks to address the root causes of poor health from childhood will be critical to improving opportunities and outcomes for future generations.

Professor Karl Whittle explores how we can meet our net zero goals, arguing that an urgent transformation of the way we generate and use energy is required, along with the long-term policy consensus necessary to facilitate investment in green infrastructure.

Professor Lydia Hayes examines the cost of living crisis, and highlights how poor quality work, as well as unaddressed barriers to employment, make it harder for many families to make ends meet. Tackling the inequalities faced by women across the labour market will, in particular, be critical to addressing this 'price of working crisis'.

Dr Alexander Nurse argues that, in order to meet net zero targets, places like Liverpool City Region will require a step change in the pace and scale of investment in sustainable transport infrastructure, enabling people to transition away from cars by developing a comprehensive public transport and active travel network.

Professor Katie Atkinson argues we have entered the age of Artificial Intelligence, and considers how Liverpool City Region can effectively navigate the risks and opportunities presented by new technologies.

Professor Alexander Lord, **Professor Richard Dunning** and **Dr Chi Wan Cheang** call for an evidence-informed approach to help relieve the housing crisis in England, demonstrating how data-led modelling can aid a more nuanced approach to planning in areas like Liverpool City Region in order to meet housing needs.

Dr Clarissa Giebel asks how we should care for the most vulnerable in society, and highlights the damaging costs of underinvestment in the social care system. Improving employment standards for social care workers, as well as making the system easier for people in need of care to access and navigate, will be critical.

Professor Richard Benjamin considers the significant role that culture plays in Liverpool City Region, and questions how this can be made more inclusive for communities that have historically been marginalised and excluded from the city region's cultural narratives and opportunities.

Professor Stuart Wilks-Heeg explores the threats to our democratic system, and considers how devolution of power to local leaders can play a role in restoring trust in politics and optimism in democracy.

However, despite this breadth, we are conscious that there are many other nationally salient topics – from education and defence, to skills and immigration – that could have been covered within this Manifesto. Indeed, the very fact of these omissions illustrates the context of polycrisis facing the nation, where multiple competing challenges demand our attention at once. The document as a whole outlines how many of the necessary foundations for future national prosperity can begin to be strengthened in places like LCR.

As such, whilst the Manifesto is the product of serious thinking about the implications of the 2024 elections, for Liverpool City Region and beyond, it is also positioned as a statement of intent for further, and wider, discussion in the months and years to come. We welcome the opportunity to work meaningfully with policy stakeholders, at all levels, to navigate the increasingly complex and uncertain landscape around us, and develop solutions that recognise the interplay between local, national, and global dynamics. The Manifesto provides a basis for this work, demonstrating the opportunity for city regions to provide the template for a more prosperous and sustainable United Kingdom, and cementing the University of Liverpool's position at the centre of innovative policy thinking.

How can we reduce health inequalities?

- Liverpool City Region is at the sharp end of health inequalities.

- There is an urgent need to put health equity and a lifecourse approach at the heart of policy decisions in our city region and nation.

- Understanding health outcomes as intrinsic to economic prosperity and how it is measured, will underscore the importance of health in achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Professor David Taylor-Robinson and Professor Louise Kenny

Liverpool City Region is at the sharp end of health inequalities. Across all six boroughs, we **fare poorly compared to the national averages of England.** People in our region have lower life expectancy and healthy life expectancy, more premature deaths from cardiovascular disease, cancers, and respiratory illnesses, and higher rates of obesity and mental health problems. Furthermore, there are significant inequalities between and within areas. Those living in the poorest parts of Liverpool **live a staggering 15 years less than those in more affluent areas**.

Inequality has no more powerful expression than in children's health, and children in our region get a particularly bad deal. The infant mortality rate in Liverpool remains above the national average (**5.3 per 1,000 versus 4.7 per 1,000**) and every year **around 26 infants in Liverpool do not reach their first birthday**. Our children have more hospital admissions for dental extractions, are less likely to be school ready, and **have high levels of mental health problems and obesity in childhood**. The pandemic has clearly exacerbated inequalities in health and society, but the most severe impacts may still be emerging. These enduring consequences are likely to impact our children the most as they grow and develop.

The foundations of good health start before birth and depend upon **good maternal and parental physical and mental health**. Poor health in the mothers of the next generation of our citizens sets up an intergenerational challenge and leads to ingrained

health inequalities which are difficult to tackle. Babies born small or early because of poor maternal health have the worst possible start to life and a health trajectory which culminates in a shorter life expectancy and more years lived in ill health. Children who survive and grow up in our region face an uncertain future; by 2040, based on current trends and without further actions, Liverpudlians will live **more than a quarter of their lives (26.1%) in ill health**.

The root causes of health inequalities in Liverpool City Region are well understood. They stem from variations in exposure to poverty and the necessary resources for maintaining health, **inequalities in experiences of environments that are harmful to health**, and differences in the chances to experience protective circumstances that foster and preserve good health – particularly **those conditions that provide children a good start in life**. Socio-economic factors, such as education, employment and income, and the built environment, including the quality of our housing, the air we breathe and our access to green spaces, have a profound and enduring effect on our health. Greater exposure to child poverty in our region is a major problem. We know from **a large body of evidence** that poverty drives poor child health - worsening physical and mental health outcomes, undermining children's learning, social wellbeing and education, and risking lower lifelong health and productivity.

Research shows that in recent years austerity policies have exacerbated the situation, with **local authority**

spending reductions and changes to welfare impacting more severely on places like Liverpool City Region, and disproportionately affecting more vulnerable groups, such as children. Liverpool is the third most deprived local authority in England and the council has seen its **funding reduced by around 65 per cent since 2010**, significantly curtailing its ability to strategically invest and fund interventions that have been proven to have a positive public health benefit, such as expanding access to children's centres and affordable quality housing. Research has shown that rising child poverty has contributed to **rising inequalities in infant mortality** and **children becoming looked after**. There is also evidence that reductions in local government spending have **deepened inequalities in life expectancy at birth** and **childhood obesity**.

The Health Foundation's analysis showed that cuts to the public health grant in England have fallen **more heavily on the most deprived areas despite these places having the greatest need**. This is one of the most blatant and egregious examples of a false economy in our time. The impact of poor health on our economic prosperity dwarfs the savings made in public grant cuts by incurring direct costs for the Treasury through lost tax revenue, increased benefit payments and NHS costs. In contrast, **good health can drive economic success through increased labour supply, improved productivity, reduced healthcare expenditure, and greater innovation**.

Overwhelming evidence supports the need for a 'lifecourse' approach to tackling social inequalities and improving the health and wealth of the next generation. **Long-term strategies must prioritise investment in children**. Importantly, insights gained from previous initiatives, such as the English Health Inequalities Strategy, provide valuable direction. **This comprehensive strategy addressed factors causing health inequalities, with a particular focus on child poverty**. Its broad focus of actions ranged from prioritising funding proportionate to need, strengthening social support for families, and **supporting early child development through children's centres**.

There is an urgent need to put health equity and a lifecourse approach at the heart of policy decisions in our region, developing an integrated health inequalities strategy, **with a focus on children at its heart**. This would have an emphasis on 'health in all policies', including evaluating the impact of major policy changes that are likely to influence health.

To support this, we should integrate metrics of population health and wellbeing into measures of regional and national economic progress and performance. This integration will provide a more comprehensive understanding of societal well-being and sustainable development and will facilitate:

Holistic assessment of well-being

Health outcomes, such as life expectancy, infant mortality rates, school readiness and disease prevalence, reflect the overall health and well-being of a population. Including these measures alongside traditional economic indicators offers a more holistic assessment of societal progress and quality of life.

Reduction of inequality

Reducing inequalities in these health metrics should be a key policy goal. Building these metrics into economic evaluations, policymakers can better identify and address disparities, promoting greater social equity and inclusion.

A health in all policies approach to decision-making

Integrating health metrics into economic evaluations provides policymakers with valuable insights into the interconnections between health, economic development, and social well-being. This facilitates more informed decision-making and the allocation of resources to areas that yield the greatest benefits in terms of both health and economic prosperity.

Overall, including health outcomes in metrics for judging economic prosperity acknowledges the intrinsic link between health and development and underscores the importance of prioritising population health as a fundamental component of sustainable economic growth. Simply put, this recognises that, in Liverpool City Region and elsewhere, there can be no wealth without health.

Author biography

Professor David Taylor-Robinson, W.H. Duncan Chair in Health Inequalities, is Professor of Public Health and Policy at the University of Liverpool and Honorary Consultant in Child Public Health at Alder Hey Children's Hospital. David is internationally recognised for his pioneering work in public health and particularly child health inequalities.

Professor Louise Kenny, Executive Pro Vice Chancellor of the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences at the University of Liverpool, is a Professor of Maternal and Fetal Health. Louise is widely regarded as one of the world's leading experts on hypertensive disorders of pregnancy.

David and Louise are co-founders and the Principal Investigators of the Wellcome Trust funded programme, **Children Growing up in Liverpool** (C-GULL), a new birth cohort which seeks to determine the early life causes of later child, adolescent and adult health outcomes.

How do we meet our net zero goals?

- To meet net zero by 2050, the UK must change how energy is generated, moving from carbon to zero carbon technologies.
- To achieve this, the UK needs to reduce total demand by increasing efficiency and changing behaviour.
- Policy must move from being short-term and volatile to long-term and stable.

Professor Karl Whittle

In 2019, Parliament passed legislation **that the UK achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050**, formalising a process of reducing carbon emissions to prevent irreversible climate change that was already in progress. Liverpool City Region, meanwhile, has set an even more ambitious target of achieving net zero by 2040.

Whilst net zero has been accepted by most, there are some who vocally disagree, reducing long-term policy goals to short-term political flashpoints. The establishment of clean air zones and migration away from petrol/diesel cars to electric vehicles, both of which would improve air quality, are viewed by some as a challenge to car ownership and as the state reducing choice. Similarly there is debate about whether to delay replacement of old gas boilers by zero carbon systems such as heat pumps. Even installation of more efficient light bulbs is regarded by some as an unnecessary intrusion by the state into personal life.

Nevertheless, the introduction of a formal target for net zero set in place the foundations for a green revolution that is both ecologically and economically sensible, providing improved quality of life, increased employment opportunities, and more equitable access to energy. To achieve net zero, revolutions in how energy is provided and delivered, linked with a reduction in demand, are vital.

In the UK, North West, and Liverpool City Region **there is an abundance of energy sources** that can be used

as we reduce reliance on fossil fuels. However, for these sources to be viable, the key change necessary for a net zero society is reduction in the energy we use, as this will lower energy generation requirements which are then easier to meet.

Revolution in demand

Key to reducing demand is maximising effectiveness. Taking the household as an example, in the UK it is estimated that **a large number of homes are leaking heat**. Lowering external loss of heat reduces heating requirements, leading to less heating required and minimising costs for the household. Moving from carbon emitting gas boilers to energy efficient heat pumps will help, but retrofitting housing, and increasing insulation, is also crucial.

Linked with household demand reduction is **industrial decarbonisation**. In LCR, projects such as **HyNet** – a system of hydrogen production and utilisation based in the city region – are seeking to reduce carbon emissions from industry. Reduction in industrial demand can be through the development of new processes, such as using hydrogen for industrial heating and manufacture, as tested at **Pilkington** and **Glass Futures** in St Helens.

Two less well understand aspects of energy demand management are time of use and energy storage. Peak demand across the day changes, **on average a change of 35% from lowest demand to highest**, even before seasonal demand changes are included.

Balancing demand through use of local energy storage, such as household batteries, or vehicles providing energy when at home can help with this, but other methods such as hydrogen that can be produced during low demand and used during high demand will contribute further.

Carbon capture and storage (CCS) also has a role to play in the transition to net zero. However, CCS should not be used as a mechanism to allow current carbon emitting technologies to continue. If used correctly as a transitionary technology, it has a role to play and provides extra time to complete the changeover to net zero energy.

These all link with a revolution in supply.

Revolution in supply

In the North West, there are abundant zero carbon emitting energy resources, with off-shore wind in the **Mersey bay area and North Wales coast**, and the **second highest tidal range in the UK**. In the current energy mix, electricity generation in the North West is becoming increasingly zero carbon. For example, there is ~2.8 GW of existing offshore wind capacity, with potential future expansion of a further ~5 GW. Expansion of zero carbon energy generation in the region will ensure use of zero carbon energy moves from being intermittent, to common, to 100% of energy consumed.

This generation capacity can be further increased by using all available opportunities, such as rooftop solar panels increasing capacity, onshore wind, and the proposed Mersey tidal barrage. Each of these technologies increase zero carbon energy generation, and tidal could provide other benefits such as flood defence and facilities for wind and solar energy generation.

However, with increasing wind, solar and tidal comes a need for increased storage, such as batteries or through the formation of hydrogen, allowing for surplus energy to be set aside for times of excessive demand. Nuclear energy can play a role providing continuous stable energy for long periods, allowing other technologies to be used more effectively.

Currently, gas fired power stations provide the bulk of electricity, meeting the challenge of supply when other energy sources are unable to. However, to meet net

zero these power stations will not be replaced when life expired, leading to a challenge that needs to be managed if demand is to be met.

When it comes to supply, one key advantage that wind, solar and tidal generation provide over gas is operating cost. The operating costs for these technologies are not impacted by the cost of fuel. For example, in 2022 the **price of gas rose** due to market instability arising from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, increasing costs for users and also raising concerns for supply. Moving away from gas to other technologies will greatly reduce the risk and exposure for energy generators and, more importantly, consumers.

Revolution in policy

To enable large-scale investment in facilities along with employment and training, long-term stability in policy is key. Long-term planning and finance allow for investment in facilities, employment, and delivery, while short-term uncertainty prevents this. For example, changes in policy on wind, solar and nuclear energy affect project financing, reducing the chances of projects achieving viability.

For society, a successful green revolution brings benefits in employment, skills development, and increased opportunities for manufacturing and exports, as new technologies are developed and implemented.

For individuals and households, the green revolution can enhance quality of life, reduce inequality, provide opportunities in areas where previously there may have been few, whilst at the same time can lead to a better environment for society to flourish.

For the goal of net zero by 2050 to be met, action is needed now. Delay increases the cost of implementation both economically and, more importantly, environmentally. Put simply, the longer we take, the more likely irreversible climate change is, and the more we will need to pay to address it.

Author biography

Karl Whittle is Professor of Zero Carbon and Nuclear Energy at the University of Liverpool. He researches how net zero can be achieved using a range of technologies, including nuclear energy, hydrogen, wind, solar and tidal.

How can we address the cost of living crisis?

- The cost of living – affording a warm, secure home and decent food – and the price of working – insecure earnings, low pay, and poor health – are two sides of the same crisis.
- An Essentials Guarantee would ensure benefits are always enough to cover essentials like food, household bills and travel costs.
- Together with a new Workers' Bill of Rights, enabling working people to secure better, healthier working conditions and wages, these measures would provide a first line of defence.
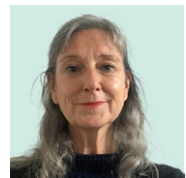
Professor Lydia Hayes

The price of almost everything has shot up of late. The 'cost of living crisis' describes the struggle to afford decent quality food and a warm, secure place to call home. But it would be a mistake to think the cost of living crisis impacts everyone. Those in 'crisis' over basic living costs are mainly workers in low-wage work, those who depend on welfare benefits and those who await the outcome of asylum applications. To fix the 'cost of living crisis', we must respond to what I call the 'price of working crisis', because for too many, the price of working is insecure earnings, low pay and poor health for themselves and others. Hardship is everywhere to be seen and we surely cannot carry on like this.

The cost of living crisis **did not come out of the blue.** Policy decisions taken since the global financial crisis of 2008 have normalised the fact that many working families in the UK now struggle to afford a decent standard of living. The value of the national minimum wage fell each year between 2008 and 2015 and minimum wage rates fell behind again in 2022. For eight of the ten years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, it was **government policy for wage growth in the public sector** to be frozen or capped at 1% and, during the pandemic, public sector wages were frozen again. Across the whole economy, wages have stagnated for more than 15 years, employment **protections** have been eroded, and there

is a generation and a half of nine million workers who have never worked in an economy with sustained rising average wages.

The value of welfare benefits to support low earners has **fared even worse**, with benefit levels frozen from 2010. There is also a cap on the total benefit available to households, no money for children born as a family's third or subsequent child, and capped housing allowance.

Many organisations in Liverpool City Region are campaigning for an **Essentials Guarantee**, a new law to ensure that benefits are always enough to cover essentials like food, household bills and travel costs. This guarantee would protect everyone from the risk that in hard times they could be plunged into crisis over the basic costs of living. Such a guarantee is much needed and well overdue, but action on benefits alone is not enough: the 'price of working crisis' demands our attention too. The austerity-driven harshness of cuts to welfare benefits were accompanied by a punitive benefit sanctions regime operating since 2012. Fear of benefit sanctions has effectively forced people to take and to tolerate zero-hours contracts and jobs they find harmful to themselves and their families. Sanctions have fuelled the rise of insecure employment across low paying sectors. **Research I have published with the Feeding Liverpool network** shows that increasing

numbers of workers in Liverpool turn to food banks and food pantries because they are struggling to cope with insecure and inappropriate employment. An Essentials Guarantee should go hand-in-hand with the disbanding of benefit sanctions.

The price of working crisis sees record numbers of workers **in insecure jobs**; record numbers **too ill to work;** and record numbers **experiencing food insecurity.** There is a strong and growing body of evidence that **poor quality jobs make people ill.** This can be because workers are not earning enough to afford sufficient healthy and nutritious food, they can't afford to keep warm, or they can't afford to move out of damp and mouldy accommodation. It can also be because the stress of low pay and insecure hours puts workers' **mental** and **physical** health at risk. A 2024 report by the Director of Public Health in Liverpool notes that **the quality of employment** has a marked influence on how long a person lives and how long they live in good health. Employment is **one of the main drivers** of deprivation linked to poor health, and it not only affects workers individually, it also affects the health and life opportunities of their whole family.

Asylum seekers are caught up in the price of working crisis too. For them, the price of working is the risk of a criminal conviction, imprisonment or forced deportation. Stringent restrictions on lawful access to employment effectively ban asylum seekers from being able to support themselves. It is now over 10 years since Liverpool City Council passed a **resolution to end the destitution of asylum seekers**. Without lawful access to employment, asylum seekers face extreme poverty while they are waiting, **often for years**, for claims to be processed. The ban on access to employment is cruel and nonsensical because it forgoes the economic benefits of putting asylum seekers' skills and talent to work, instead forcing them to rely on an allowance of just £49.18 a week for food, toiletries, and clothing. **Lifting the ban** on employment for asylum seekers should serve as a vital complement to the Essentials Guarantee, ensuring asylum seekers have access to the social, health and economic benefits of being able to support themselves and their families.

The largest category (39%) of **Universal Credit claimants**, some 2.5 million of working people, are enveloped by the cost of living crisis because they are in jobs that pay too little to manage without welfare benefits. The large majority are women. The price of working crisis results in poverty, ill-health, and hunger/food insecurity. It also contributes to **inflationary labour shortages,** unmet demand and very low rates of UK economic productivity because poor quality jobs make people ill. Another group heavily impacted by the price of working crisis are the **record numbers of workers on disability benefits.** That means record numbers unable to meet the cost of living due to

long-term ill health. Many people on the **NHS waiting list** have a job – but the longer they wait, the more likely they are to take lengthy sick leave and to end up reliant on disability benefits. A huge 36% of those claiming Universal Credit are either too ill to work themselves or unable to work because they are caring for someone else. The proportion of women who are unable to work is higher than ever before.

We need a **Workers' Bill of Rights** to enable working people to secure better, healthier, working conditions and wages. The single most important element is for government to take steps to ensure collective bargaining takes place between trade unions and employers across every sector. Collective bargaining is a form of industrial democracy that gives workers, through their unions, a say in their terms and conditions of employment. Without the opportunity to negotiate collectively, individual workers have no voice and are offered terms on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. The Liverpool-based **Institute of Employment Rights** has brought together the UK's leading labour law experts to **create recommendations** for how best to support collective bargaining in the UK.

To achieve fairer, healthier pay and conditions we need new rights to protect us all from the risks of income crisis, from harmful conditions of work and to provide all workers with a decent standard of living. This means a new Essentials Guarantee so that the hardships endured by so many in recent years are not repeated and we need a stronger voice for working people. Collective agreements negotiated between employers and trade unions would drive up pay, secure equality for women, improve productivity and training, and achieve security of hours to produce jobs that are good for workers' health and enable them to improve their lives. That's how the cost of living crisis can be addressed.

Author biography

Lydia Hayes is Professor of Labour Rights at Liverpool School of Law and Social Justice. Her research seeks a renewed purpose and design of individual and collective labour law: to transform it into a body of law that enables working-class people to enjoy their best possible health. This means finding ways for people who work, people who would like to work, and the workers of the future, to participate in achieving a new raft of labour rights that are meaningful, protective and can be easily enforced.

How can we deliver sustainable mobility?

- Liverpool City Region has made a good start in meeting its net zero obligations, but we now need to see policy translate into even more real-world results which reach every corner of the city region.

- Sustainable transport such as walking, cycling and public transport brings benefits including cleaner air, and improved health and wellbeing. We need to be bold in weaning Liverpool City Region out of our cars and on to sustainable transport. This means making difficult decisions, but it is the only way we will achieve our climate obligations.

- The way we use our roads needs to change. This will mean more bus lanes and segregated cycleways. We should embrace the change and see it as a way to transform our city region for the better.
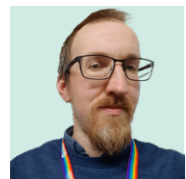
Dr Alexander Nurse

In 2019, Liverpool City Region joined local and devolved government across the UK to declare a climate emergency – recognising that the Earth's climate is changing rapidly for the worse, and we need equally rapid action to prevent prolonged and irreversible damage. Leaders across Liverpool City Region (LCR) have set ambitious targets to achieve this – many of which go further than the goal of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 **set by the UN**. For example, LCR Combined Authority (LCRCA) has committed to reaching net zero by 2040. Liverpool City Council has gone further, **aiming to achieve this by 2030** – just 6 years from now.

Transport is **responsible for 26%** of the UK's annual greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, if we are going to stand a chance of achieving net zero in time, this seems like a sensible and important place to start. However, government has so far been reluctant to take bold decisions to reduce vehicle emissions, with recent debates on policies such as Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) and improvements to cycle infrastructure holding back progress. Meanwhile, government has also cancelled investment in major

public transport infrastructure such as HS2 Phase 2. This chapter explores why sustainable transport matters for Liverpool City Region and the UK. Since 2020 LCR has made some important strides in reaching this goal, but ambitious visions of being 'best in class' have yet to materialise. As we look forward to the election and beyond, the chapter examines the challenges and early wins LCR has had and identifies priorities for our leaders for the next five years.

In many ways, LCR is no different to many other places in the UK. We are addicted to cars. In Liverpool, Department for Transport figures show that whilst there was good progress in reducing vehicle miles in the early 2000s, these gains were wiped out in the 2010s (Figure 1). Equally, whilst there was a massive reduction in vehicle miles during the pandemic this has effectively bounced back to pre-COVID levels. After a similar reduction in numbers, LCR's public transport network has recovered to around **90% of its pre-COVID capacity**. While many more employees work from home than pre-pandemic, there is still a broader sense that private car usage continues to dominate.

Figure 1: *Vehicle Miles in Liverpool (Source – **DfT 2023**)*
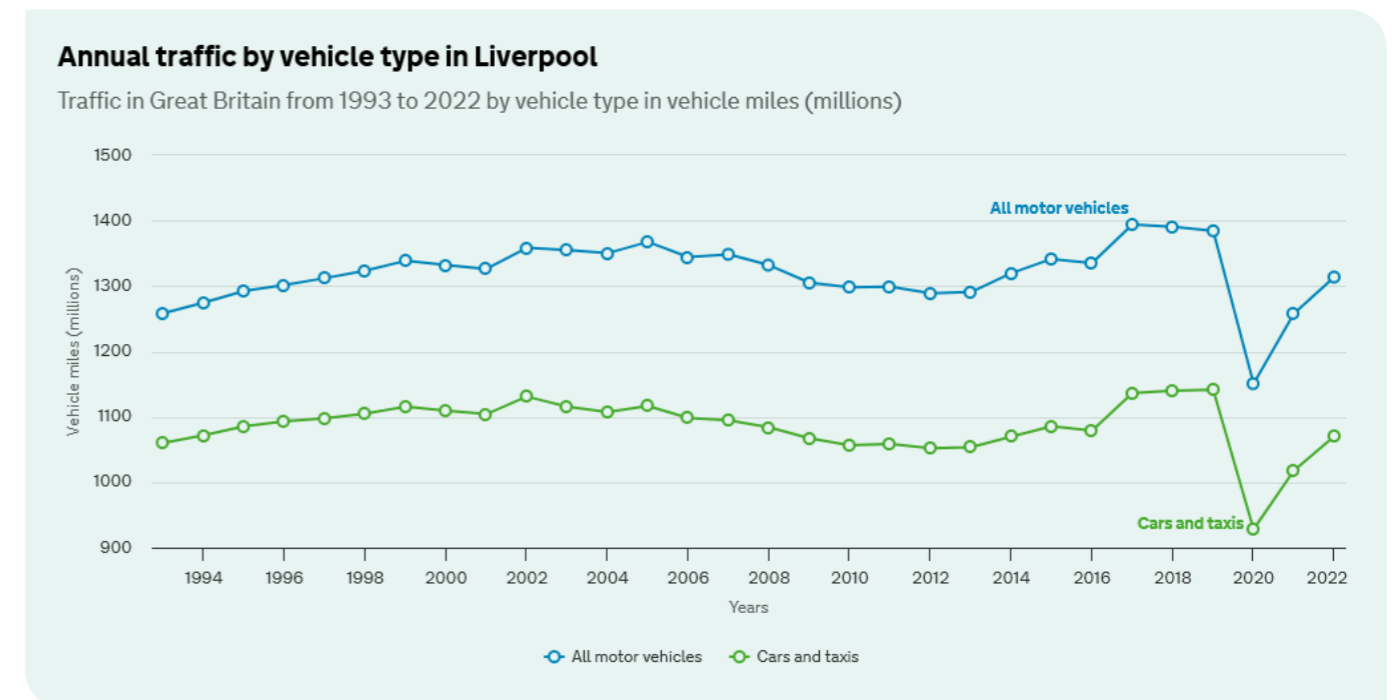
Although the challenge is stark, it is not insurmountable. Indeed, the last few years have seen some good early wins. Active Travel (i.e. walking and cycling) infrastructure has steadily been popping up all over the region. This includes the **Princes Avenue scheme and a remodelled Lime Street in Liverpool, and a 'Cyclops' Junction in St Helens**. Similarly, 'pop-up' cycleways have laid some of the foundation for a strategic network. Elsewhere, MerseyTravel has begun to roll out its electrified fleet of trains, whilst also **taking delivery of Hydrogen-powered buses,** giving a glimpse to the potential future of the bus network.

There are also promising signs of things to come. In 2023, Mayor Steve Rotheram announced that all buses in LCR would be **brought back under public control via a franchising model** taking effect in 2026. The £710m Sustainable Travel Settlement awarded to LCR should also support significant change. This includes plans for the Green Bus Network, through which LCRCA will develop dedicated bus lanes across key strategic routes across the region. Not only will this begin to restore the city's network of bus lanes, but it will also benefit cyclists who should also be able to use the routes as a safe space to cycle away from cars.

Cycling should also see some more concrete action in the coming period. For example, LCRCA is developing its next strategic corridor in East Wirral, whilst Liverpool City Council is currently consulting on a strategic route between Liverpool City Centre and Woolton.

What should policymakers consider to support sustainable travel?

As we plan for a more sustainable transport network in LCR, net zero should permeate everything we do. As discussed here, there are signs LCR is heading in the right direction, with the net zero target enshrined in both the draft **Local Transport Plan**, and draft **Spatial Development Strategy.**

The single biggest job facing our policymakers over the next decade is weaning us off cars. Simply put, if we swap petrol and diesel-powered cars for electric vehicles, we won't achieve our goals. More walking and cycling, and greater public transport ridership give us far more bang for our buck. However, there is a delicate balance to be reached. The average car commuter wastes **50 hours** every year sat in traffic – and electric vehicles won't fix that. At the same time, if we want people to ride bikes and take buses the infrastructure that supports these activities needs to take road space away from cars.

This transition needs careful planning to ensure a reduction in road space does not mean more congestion. That may sound like a difficult sell, but evidence suggests **69% of people** in LCR would support building more segregated cycleways, even if it meant less room for other road traffic. Evidence from other cities, including Copenhagen, London, and Paris suggests that if high quality infrastructure is provided then people will use it. The more people use sustainable transport, the more likely we are to

encourage people of all backgrounds to take part. For example, **studies suggest** that once modal share of cycling reaches 7% we are far more likely to see gender equality amongst users.

There are also other relatively easy wins that can be achieved. We need to be braver in tackling the scourge of pavement parking. All too often, parked cars can block footpaths, crossings, and even the roadway itself making it less desirable to walk and cycle. National policy could change to enable more enforcement of pavement parking restrictions, **as has happened in Scotland**. Equally, we can continue to learn from the great examples set by **School Streets** in place across LCR. Every day, too many of us drive our children to school when we should easily be able to support walking and cycling. It's a commitment we owe to their future.

There is now a recognition in Liverpool City Region that whilst some good active travel and public transport infrastructure has been delivered in the last five years, we need to move beyond a piecemeal approach. Now, LCR's leaders, supported by national government, need to think more cohesively. This will involve joining up what we already have in building strategic infrastructure corridors that link home and work. However, the scale of the net zero challenge means there is absolutely no room for complacency. Visions of being 'best in class' have not yet been realised. Whilst LCR is moving in the right direction, there is much more to do, and the grim fact is we are running out of time to do it. Liverpool City Region's words and strategy in this area are right. That's no small thing. Now we need to support this by backing it up with clearer and, ultimately, faster action.

Author biography

Dr Alexander Nurse is a Senior Lecturer in Urban Planning at the University of Liverpool. His research interests cover urban cycling and active travel more broadly, alongside city and regional governance.

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How can we address the challenges and meet the opportunities of Artificial Intelligence?

- Liverpool City Region already has strong pockets of activity where AI is being developed and deployed, but this activity is not evenly spread within and beyond our key sectors.

- It is essential that our private industries and public sectors prepare themselves for the range of changes that AI will bring, covering skills training, changing jobs, regulation awareness and risk management.

- Collaboration with local experts on AI who are developing AI technologies, and stakeholders who have already embarked upon the AI deployment journey, will be essential for maximising opportunities that the current and next generation of AI technologies will bring.
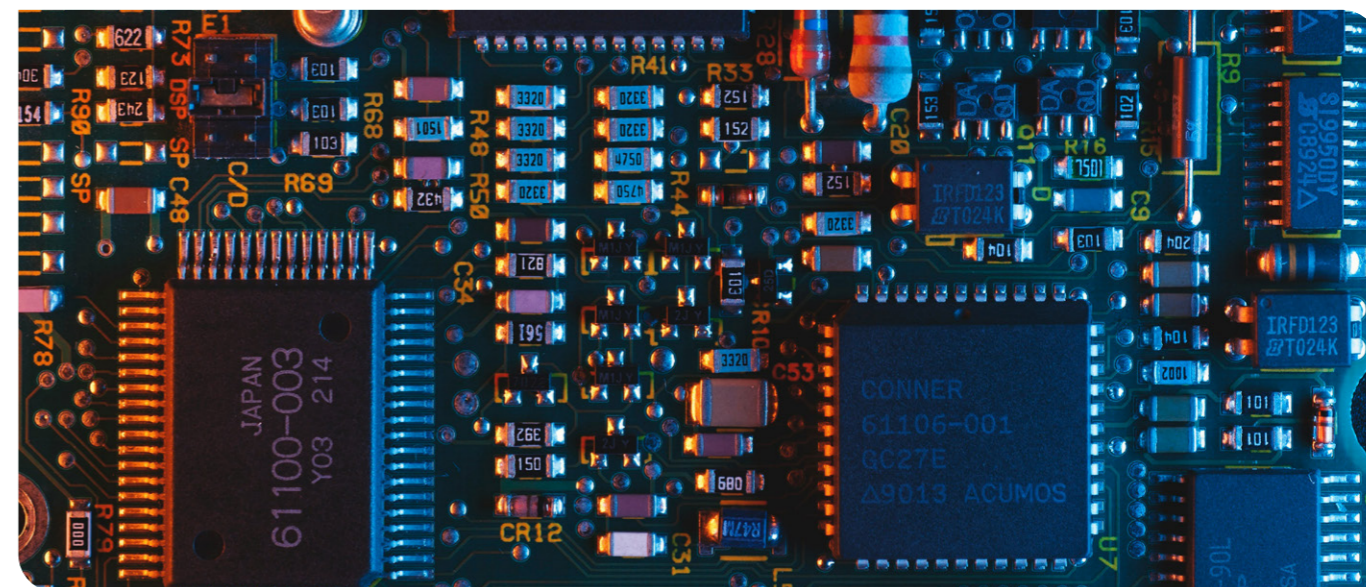
Professor Katie Atkinson

In 2024 we are beyond the dawn of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and well and truly into the daylight of the AI era. Whilst research on AI has been undertaken for many decades, stretching back to the 1950s, it is only in the past ten years that we have seen AI actually start to be deployed in a range of sectors and everyday applications, with the most recent acceleration coming through the widespread use of generative AI. As with any new technology, there are so many opportunities for AI to be deployed to tackle challenges of importance to society, but there are serious risks of the misuse of this technology that must also be accounted for.

There is no shortage of written commentary weighing up the balance of opportunities versus risks brought by AI. Much of this commentary is pitched at a national or global level, with a focus on the pressing questions around regulation of AI. But now is also an ideal moment for regional reflection on what the consequences of AI will be on local areas and what planning should take place to provide a local response to proliferation of AI within our industries, public sector and general populace.

Within Liverpool City Region (LCR), we already have a variety of activities well-established for developing and deploying AI. Our universities have degree programmes dedicated to AI and data science, and the significant rise in the number of students studying these topics over the past five years demonstrates the acknowledgement within the student population of the importance of AI for our future economy and society. There are excellent job prospects for AI graduates, as demonstrated in the national data that shows a very high proportion entering the job market quickly and securing high-skilled work. Of course, the flip side of this jobs success story is the concern about AI and automation making other jobs obsolete. We already have increasing levels of intelligent automation in manufacturing work that is important to the region, but we are now starting to see AI deployment in new areas such as scientific labs and services industries.

Much of the rollout of AI in the immediate future is focused on provision of decision-support tools that will assist humans in doing their work, providing consistency checking and information summarisation, but leaving any final decisions to a human. Thus, ensuring that strong digital skills are widespread within the local population will be an imperative. It will be essential that our schools equip children with a baseline of digital skills needed for future work that go beyond passive consumption of digital material on a smart device; knowing how to use data analytics tools and interpret what conclusions can and cannot be drawn from these will become a skill needed in multiple workplace scenarios. Employers, colleges and universities will also need to ensure the embedding of digital skills as relevant for a specific discipline within their training and education programmes. In the longer term, trends will need to be monitored for local sector-specific job reductions due to AI, to feed into national policy discussions on this topic.

Research and development of AI is well-established in the city region, within our universities and through partnerships with local industries. Academics and PhD researchers working in universities have fostered strong links with industrial partners to undertake knowledge transfer of new research into activities that address real-world problems, though some sectors are further ahead than others on this journey. Some key examples are given here of recent projects that demonstrate the diverse industries already engaged in digital transformation activities, but with policy challenges noted.

- The **Materials Innovation Factory** is enabling significant collaboration with local employer Unilever on topics in computer-aided materials design. Ground-breaking research on the development of a **mobile robot chemist** is accelerating the advancement of AI for chemistry, and a newly awarded £12M **hub for development of state-of-the-art AI for Chemistry** will accelerate adoption of AI in the chemistry and materials science industries in LCR and beyond. Lab automation offers opportunities for increased productivity with experiments conducted by a robot being able to run 24 hours a day, but this will change the role of a lab technician who needs to be able to work alongside robots.

- LCR has a record of leading on front-runner projects in AI and law. The University of Liverpool has specific expertise in this topic area and has worked on **successful collaborations with law firms** to develop explainable AI tools to help law firms process their legal work swiftly and consistently. A successful project between the University and Fletchers Solicitors has led to the development of a decision support tool that is used by the company for deciding whether serious injury cases should continue to be investigated and the tool has saved "**tens of thousands of hours**" in staff time, demonstrating the potential for improving access to justice for clients who get a swifter outcome with the use of the tools.

- Data science expertise was crucial in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. A team of experts led by the University of Liverpool evaluated the world's first city-wide, voluntary **COVID-19 rapid antigen testing pilot in Liverpool**. The analysis done on this exercise yielded insights that supported policymakers, public health teams and the public with approaches to Covid-19 testing and re-opening of society from lockdowns. Given the pressures on health services in the region, the rollout of data analytics to support

health policy decision making will become more prevalent, though public engagement will be crucial to making this both successful and trustworthy given the need to respect citizens' data privacy.

All these examples on the use of AI and data science in R&D within LCR demonstrate the wealth of opportunities that exist for AI to be put to use to tackle challenges in different sectors within the city region, such as how to increase commercial productivity, how to ensure access to justice and how to deliver positive health outcomes. Encouraging collaboration and partnerships between the developers of AI and industry sectors enables opportunities to be grasped to maximise benefits from these new technologies. But this must all be done within the context of ongoing dialogue with sector regulators and national policymakers. The risks around the deployment of AI should not be overlooked. AI tools need to undergo robust evaluation for confidence in their results. Employee training in the use of AI tools is needed to give confidence to those who will be making use of the tools in their work. Regulatory frameworks need to be adapted and adhered to for compliance assurance. And the people whose lives will be affected by AI need to be included in dialogues about its ongoing development and use.

There are vibrant pockets of activity in Liverpool City Region where AI is being used. As AI becomes even more ubiquitous in the coming years, it will be essential for all stakeholders to keep abreast of developments, share learning with one another and collaborate with the local technical experts and policymakers to ensure that risks around AI are accounted for and that it is deployed in a responsible manner that will benefit our region and society more generally. Opportunities abound if: R&D funding is aligned with partnership working to enable transfer of research into industrial environments; local companies have close ties with the region's universities to take advantage of recruitment opportunities of graduates and PhD researchers with skills needed for the AI-enabled workplace; career development programmes are supported for those whose jobs will change due to increased rollout of automation; and clear messages are communicated to the region's citizens to inform them of changes happening in our industries and give them a platform to voice opinions about these changes to feed into policy debates.

Author biography

Katie Atkinson is Professor of Computer Science at the University of Liverpool. She is known for her research contributions within the field of AI and Law over the past 20 years and applications of her work in a variety of industrial projects. Her current research is on explainable AI and its interdisciplinary applications.

How do we build enough new homes in the right places?

- What does the 'housing crisis' mean for Liverpool City Region? Planning policy identifies the number of new homes needed across the city region, but not their size, type or tenure.

- We need new homes, but where could they be developed? New research identifies an alternative method for identifying where housing could be delivered.

- This innovative approach could help policymakers address the challenge building the right new homes in the right places.

Professor Alexander Lord, Professor Richard Dunning and Dr Chi Wan Cheang

Figure 1: Annual housing need for Liverpool City Region, standard method (2023 figure)

A quick internet search for "England, Housing" reveals that the most commonly applied adjective in the thousands of articles found is, "Crisis". Unlike many issues worthy of this descriptor, the origins and character of the English housing crisis are not that complicated. We simply do not build enough new homes. In an era where political consensus is rare there is very little dispute on this issue: Labour and Conservatives are in rare harmony with an identified annual need of 300,000 new homes, while the Liberal Democrats' assessment stands at 380,000.

However, these commitments to oversee significant building programmes exist within the context of a decades-long trend of successive governments consistently failing to meet their own targets. With the exception of a single year (2005/6, when 200,000 homes were built), every successive government since 1997 has failed to meet its annual housing targets. The result is that the level of new supply required is now far greater than the last time the target was met.

The intransigence of a housing crisis that is now around 25 years in the making explains why it has been such a prominent feature of British domestic policy in the 21st century. More generally, housing is a pivotal societal issue that has clear implications for public health and productivity.

What can be done about this situation? Does research offer a way out of the housing crisis and what would this look like locally in Liverpool City Region?
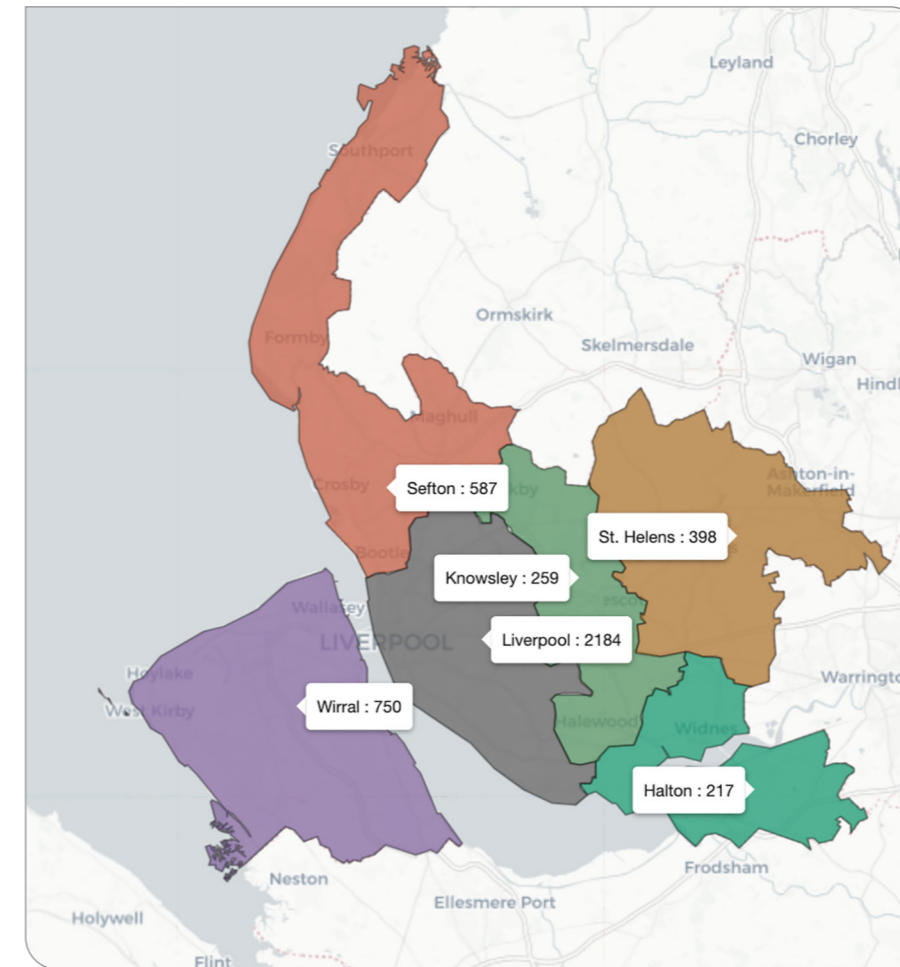
The housing numbers game: how many or, just, *how?*

The first issue to unpack is the numbers themselves. How do we arrive at a target number of required new homes per annum? The short answer to this is through a government-mandated calculation called the 'standard method' which combines demography and housing affordability data.

It is this calculation that results in a headline number of homes required for each local authority area in England. For example, the most recent iteration of the standard method produces an annual housing need for Liverpool City Region of 4,395 new homes, as shown in Figure 1.

However, this is as far as the standard method goes: it is silent on the more practical and essential question of how or where this development should be accommodated. The standard method also provides no insight whatsoever into three related and essential questions:

1. What are the size, type and tenure characteristics of the new homes that are required?
2. Where within a local area is housing pressure greatest?
3. Can a local area accommodate the scale of new development required?

To address these interrelated questions, we have designed a model that disaggregates housing need to the smallest possible geography – the Lower Super Output Area (LSOA). This neighbourhood-scale geography allows us to model spatial variability in housing need. For example, Figure 2 illustrates the spatially variable character of housing need for the six local authorities that comprise the Liverpool City Region.

This modelling allows us to provide critically important information to local policymakers that can inform development decision making.

For example, what if we wanted to understand the implications of enforcing a 'no development on greenbelt' policy in the Liverpool City Region? Our model allows us to 'turn off' all the LSOAs that comprise the city region's greenbelt. The housing need that was present in these areas is re-distributed, using the authors' proprietary statistical method, to comparator areas in sufficiently close proximity to be a plausible alternative given historical data on the distance of residential moves. Figure 3 presents how this scenario would look.

Figure 3 illustrates an alternative way of accommodating the city region's housing requirement to that set out in Figure 2: the housing need that was present in LSOAs in the greenbelt has been re-distributed to comparable, non-greenbelt LSOAs. It should also be noted this method provides a comprehensive breakdown of the type and tenure of new homes required for each LSOA.The same number (4,335), type and tenure of required new homes have been accommodated but in a different distribution under a hypothetical planning policy.

Of course, a more nuanced planning policy could be implemented that did not suppress development
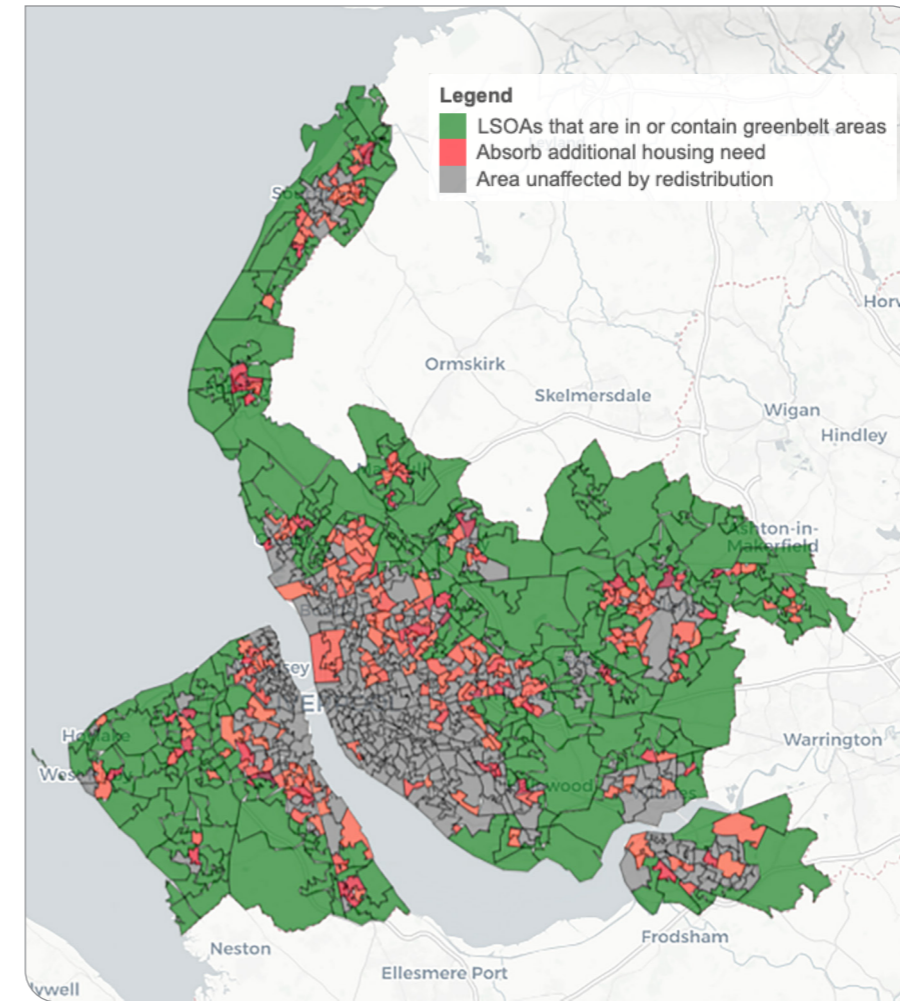
Figure 2: *Annual housing need at LSOA level across Liverpool City Region*

Figure 3: *Housing need redistributed under a 'greenbelt off' planning policy*
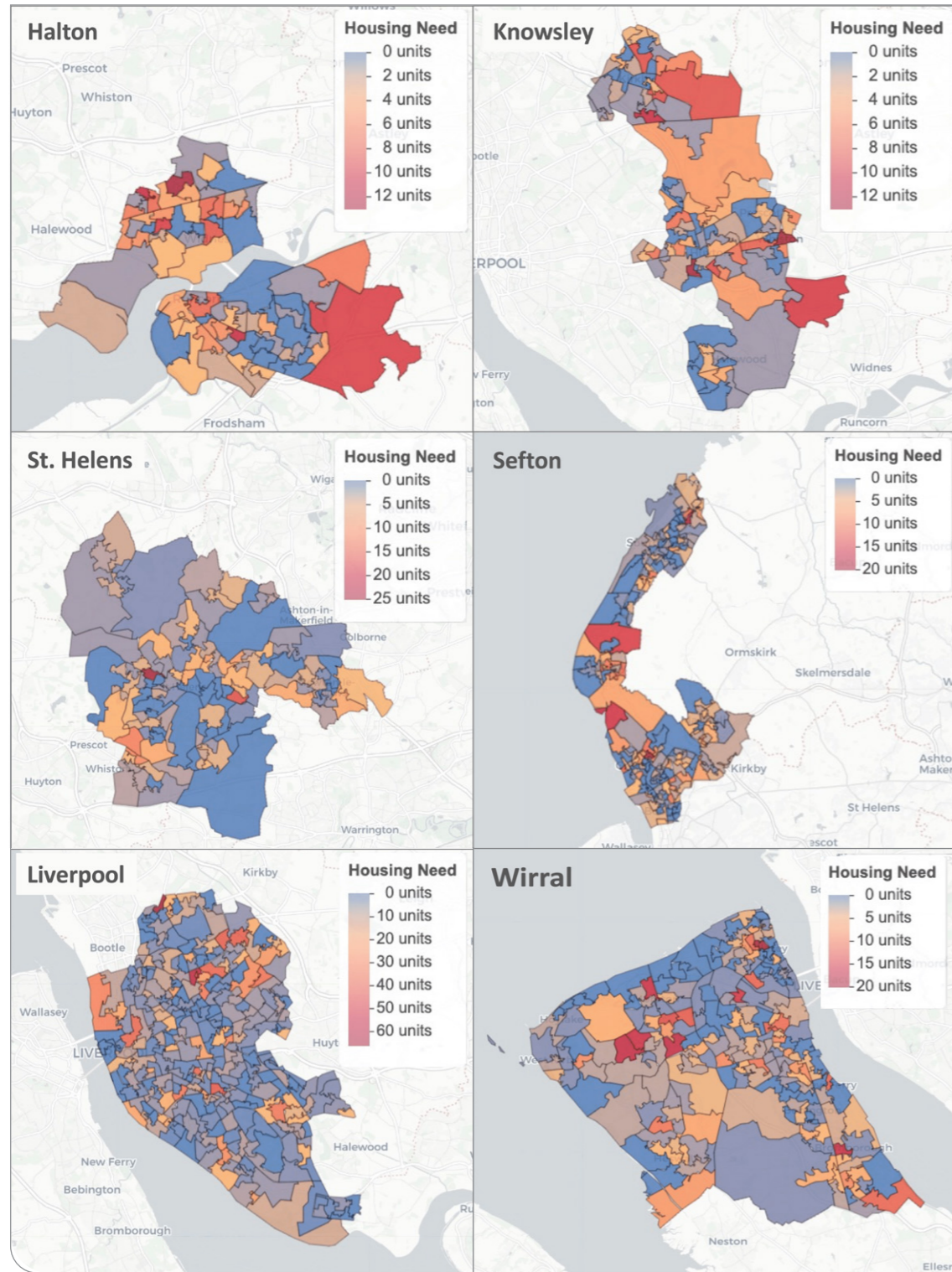
on *all* greenbelt: this would be a matter for local decision making. The point is that the model allows local policymakers to test scenarios and arrive at local housing policies that are greatly more specific regarding the character of housing need and how his can be accommodated by either 'turning down/off' some LSOAs and/or 'turning up' others - say, as part of a regeneration strategy.

The prospect is of an evidence-informed approach to housing policy that will allow local decision makers to plan for development in a much more proactive way than has historically been the case. Taking a more scientific and data-led approach to understanding the character and geography of housing need will be critical in addressing what is likely to be one of the principal domestic policy issues for any government in 2024 and beyond.

Author biography

Professor Alexander Lord is Lever Chair of Town and Regional Planning in the Department of Geography and Planning at the University of Liverpool. He has written widely on the assessment of housing need as well as leading research projects in this space for the Economic and Social Research Council and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Richard Dunning is Professor of Land Economy and Housing at the University of Liverpool, where he is the Director of Research in Planning. Richard's research interests are in behavioural economics in the built environment, focussing on housing and development. He is also the Co-Editor-in-Chief of the journal Housing and Society and was previously the Vice Chair of the Housing Studies Association.

Dr Chi Wan Cheang is a Lecturer in Economics at the University of Liverpool's Management School specialising in econometrics, housing economics, and social data science. She has worked on funded projects relating to housing need, affordability, and the proposed Infrastructure Levy.

How should we care for the most vulnerable in society?

- The social care sector lacks adequate investment to support the care of the most vulnerable in our society, and its workforce.
- The social care workforce requires urgent attention, to feel better supported, paid, and trained. Investment into a social care career path, qualifications and pay would improve development and help to create and sustain the sector's workforce.
- Simplifying the navigation of the complex social care system can help create more equitable access to care for those in need.

Dr Clarissa Giebel

The social care sector has been neglected for many years, with limited investment to sustain an ageing population, children with additional needs, and adults with learning and physical disabilities. In addition, the social care workforce of paid carers, managers, and other frontline staff providing vital care to individuals in need has been largely neglected. Across England, **over 1.5 million people work in the social care sector** - more than the NHS. Calls to improve and increase investment into social care, alongside the NHS, are not new, **and the issue has been prominent in public debate over the last decade**. However, all political parties seem reluctant to truly tackle the declining and underinvested UK social care system.

In a year of local and regional elections, and a possible General Election, 2024 should be a turning point for social care and the most vulnerable in our society. These issues are pertinent to the UK and England, but also for Liverpool City Region, which has an ageing population (**many of which live with poor health**), and levels of deprivation above the UK average.

Social care is funded via various sources and delivered by a complex system of private and public sector providers. UK government provides funding to local authorities for social care, which then commission care for individuals based on needs assessments, local authority budgets and the individual's own finances. However, this system is under significant pressure. Rising inflation and increasingly complex social care needs have impacted on costs for local authorities. **The Health Foundation estimates that an additional £8.3 billion per year** will be required to fund social care in England just to keep up with growing demand.

Where people fail to access public sector care services due to lack of local authority support, they are required to fully or partially self-fund public or private sector care. This can include day care, respite care, home care, and residential care. Often, third sector organisations such as **Age UK** or the **Lewy Body Society** are left to plug the gap of support needs, but this support is limited.

One of the key issues facing social care is *workforce retention, training, and skills*. Staff working in home care, residential care, and other community-based settings lack an adequate qualification pathway that recognises their skills and allows progression based on expertise. Too often, social care staff receive minimal training on the job whilst being expected to provide care for the most vulnerable members of our society. This is amplified by the fact that employees often move between different social care organisations, requiring new training to acquire the skillsets required

for a particular client group or setting. Unlike most staff in the NHS where university-level qualifications are common, social care professionals often have minimal relevant qualifications and jobs are often characterised by low salaries and zero-hour contracts.

This lack of recognition of social care as a career path is reflected in the number of vacant positions – **8.4% of positions were unfilled across the North West in 2022/23.** In addition, Brexit and new restrictions on low paid workers (and their ability to bring dependents to the UK), makes inward migration for care workers more difficult.

The social care system also needs to be *easier to navigate*. Many people in need struggle to access care due to a lack of understanding about the social care system, and inadequate links between health and social care. Accessing social care funded by local authorities begins with a social care needs assessment. However, many people **struggle to access** a needs assessment. Due to high levels of deprivation across the North West, especially in Liverpool City Region, people in need of care are often reliant on local authority funded or subsidised social care. Patients are often unable to afford services themselves, and **people with dementia** struggle in particular with the cost of living crisis. Paying for increased costs of basic necessities such as food and heating often leaves no money for much needed social care services. The social care system could be made easier to navigate by simplifying the information provided by local authorities and UK government, and to improve communications between the health and social care sectors.

The cost of social care also reflects a wider substantial issue in the sector – *inequitable access.* People in need of care can face substantial barriers that go beyond their financial means. These can include age, gender, ethnic background, location, education, and digital literacy. **These issues are particularly acute for the growing population of people living with dementia, and their mostly unpaid family carers.** It is estimated that almost one million people in the UK now live with dementia, demonstrating its importance in this election year.

Greater equity in social care access and use can be achieved by increasing investment into the system, making the system easier to navigate and improving information on where to access support, upskilling the social care workforce, and by improving both in-person and digital access to care and information.

A failure to act now will lead to substantial impacts on people's health and well-being and increase mortality rates. Not addressing these issues over the coming years will increase pressure on the already overstretched NHS. Whilst physical health and the NHS persistently feature as core electoral issues, social care is integral to a well-functioning and healthy society. Without a functioning social care system, people with learning disabilities may struggle to access the support they need. Without good quality social care, older adults may find looking after themselves more difficult if they become frail or suffer cognitive deterioration. Without adequately funded social care, social care workers in LCR and across the country may leave the sector for other industries.

This is a repeated and urgent call to politicians of all parties to truly focus their attention on how we can best support the most vulnerable in our society. This election year is the perfect time to give social care the attention it deserves. Because one day it could be us, or a family member or friend, who needs support.

Author biography

Dr Clarissa Giebel is Senior Research Fellow at the University of Liverpool and the NIHR Applied Research Collaboration North West Coast. Her national and international research explores inequalities in dementia and ageing and their solutions, and she leads the Institute of Population Health Dementia Research Group and the **European INTERDEM Taskforce on Inequalities in Dementia.**

How can we maintain a vibrant and inclusive cultural life?

- All residents should be able and encouraged to access culture, and to play a part in developing Liverpool City Region's 'place consciousness'.

- A vibrant and inclusive culture life in Liverpool City Region requires equity, the building of trust, and the centring of people's stories, even when challenging.

- Only in this way can culture play its full role in building inclusive and sustainable economic prosperity in Liverpool City Region.

Dr Richard Benjamin

Liverpool City Region's **30-year strategy for culture and creativity**, aims to "build an appreciation of and embed the value of culture and creativity as core drivers for the success of the Liverpool City Region (LCR)". Trust, equity, and centring people's stories are the cornerstones of a vibrant and inclusive cultural life. Building on these principles will enable LCR to develop perhaps less high-profile but more meaningful approaches to culture, such as memory-making and placemaking.

Regardless of intention, manifestos, strategies, and visions can shroud uncomfortable and often ignored moments and narratives that need to be assessed and embraced if one is to truly herald a vibrant, and inclusive cultural future. To embrace the full story of growth and development of the Liverpool Waterfront for example, or LCR's industrial heritage from shipbuilding to glassmaking, one must show what is referred to as "place-consciousness". For example, the **Mapping Memory on the Liverpool Waterfront Project** recognises the sites of memory for "people who lived and worked in the waterfront zone of the 1950s and 1960s", acknowledging that these are not only places of industrial development and innovation, but of civic pride.

The story of Liverpool's historic waterfront and its role in the city's development, particularly the current Waterfront Transformation Plan and the **redevelopment of the International Slavery Museum**, can be the litmus test for city regional discussions and debates on the importance and value of culture. Too often, such redevelopments fail to be inclusive, and so under-served and discriminated against groups, such as communities of colour, can have a fractured and uneasy relationship with such spaces, and can miss out on the positive effects of engaging with them, for example on wellbeing.

A vibrant waterfront and inclusive cultural scene are unobtainable without equity. Therefore, how does one go about reaching groups in LCR currently excluded from culture to aid in developing a new sense of vibrancy and cultural inclusiveness? What is the key to sustainable and embedded engagement? Building sustainable levels of trust helps. Trust opens access and dialogue to a wealth and diversity of knowledge (Liverpool-born Black, dockers, Somali, Irish, Welsh, Francophone speakers, North and South-enders) that can enhance cultural projects if utilised early enough in planning. Trust isn't gained overnight, but over years, decades even. For a location such

as a historic waterfront or industrial heritage site, where contemporary wants and needs sit side by side with strong, emotional narratives and places of memory, what is needed is a coherent and cohesive narrative thread. Where civic, commercial, and public are in the same space, each needs to have a clear understanding and respect for the other, otherwise knowledge and worth are compartmentalised. This is where a policy commitment that binds city regional development with a sense of placemaking is vital.

If culture is to be central to **LCR's Plan for Prosperity**, we must seek out difficult and sensitive issues, memories and situations and make sure that the tools for change are embedded in future planning. Planners, politicians, cultural organisations, commercial enterprises and the public should be able to benefit from, be incorporated in and be part of creating new spaces, opportunities, and infrastructures. This would help include citizens that currently don't engage with the full cultural offer available in LCR. One example is to recognise that many higher education students, **key for LCR's economic growth**, do not during their several years of study visit a local heritage attraction or have some understanding of the history of their built environment. This deprives students of gaining a rounded experience, including building awareness of sensitive and problematic histories.

Here we can look to some examples in the United States where difficult narratives are acknowledged so that innovative and sustainable placemaking can take place. In Tulsa, Oklahoma, planners and architects have attempted to confront the legacy of the infamous 1921 race-based massacre by addressing historical inequities, segregation and disinvestment, working **"hard to acknowledge the past, make an honest assessment of the present and map out a path to a more equitable future"**. Liverpool, a city that flourished and grew due to its leading role as a port in the transatlantic slave trade, acknowledged at the **International Slavery Museum**, must clearly articulate such ideals during current and future capital projects, particularly in the context of culture war debates.

To maximise cultural knowledge and harness cultural assets within LCR, we could:

Develop a regional cultural knowledge strategy. Linking with existing projects and developments such as the **Knowledge Quarter**, the strategy could draw upon historic narratives and memory to support regional cultural innovation. Knowledge creation is a key theme in innovation, but can be difficult to access. A cultural knowledge strategy could highlight assets within the creative and heritage industries.

Establish a civic knowledge and cultural innovation centre. This would be a mechanism and space for shared knowledge and resources, incorporating

elements of existing facilities and resources including: heritage assets and civic collections; galleries, libraries, archives and museums; community centres and hubs, personal stories, memories and family archives; business archives and corporate memories; and academic research. The centre would enable opportunities for collaboration between current gatekeepers of knowledge and help to develop civic and regional innovation.

Create regional cultural knowledge hubs across Liverpool City Region. Building **on LCR cultural policy objectives** to encourage "the co-location of visitor attractions, where appropriate, to create hubs across the region", LCR can utilise and harness assets in all parts of LCR, such as World of Glass in St Helens, Port Sunlight in Wirral, and Prescot Museum in Knowsley. These hubs would allow under-resourced, often independent organisations to come together as part of a larger knowledge network, supporting residents across LCR to contribute to the cultural life of the region.

UK government has set out an objective to enable "**communities everywhere to collaborate with local private and public sector organisations in creating a shared vision for the places in which they live and work**" . However, local government austerity over recent years has placed significant strain on the cultural assets of places such as Liverpool City Region. Improving cultural knowledge and ensuring all LCR residents are able and encouraged to access culture is one way of achieving the goal of more equitable access to, and involvement in, culture. The result: A vibrant, fair, inclusive, and innovative cultural life.

Author biography

Dr Richard Benjamin is Senior Lecturer in Contemporary Museum Practice at the University of Liverpool and Co-Director of the Centre for the Study of International Slavery.

How do we restore trust in democracy?

- The British public currently have less trust in elected politicians than at any time since 1983.
- Loss of trust in democracy is global and stems from discontent with both the performance and the processes of government.
- Decentralising power can help to restore trust in democracy, but it won't be easy.

Professor Stuart Wilks-Heeg

What would you like to know first about trust and democracy? The really bad news, the bad news or the faint glimmer of hope? If it's your job to promote or improve democracy, or just to keep the wheels of democracy turning, you might want to skip to the end. I promise to offer you something you can try to work with. If that helps you to find some practical solutions, please tell me about them. In fact, tell the world about them.

Otherwise, we have to start at the beginning. As we head towards a UK General Election, trust in democracy is at an all-time low. In a year with an unprecedented number of elections globally, trust in democracy is in decline everywhere in the world. Almost nothing attempted so far seems to work in reversing these trends. I would say that it doesn't get much worse than this. But it probably will. This isn't so much a crossroads as a path we are locked onto.

Is this pessimism really warranted? Ipsos MORI has polled the British public about trust since 1983. Their **'Veracity Index'** asks people whether or not they trust different professions to tell the truth. Forty years of data tell a simple story. Medics, educators and scientists generally enjoy the highest levels of trust. Trust in **clergy and priests** has declined sharply. But, arguably most striking, are the consistently low levels of trust in politicians, which recently reached an **all-time low**.

Ipsos MORI asks about trust in both politicians in general and in government ministers. Neither group has ever polled well, fighting it out with estate agents

and advertising executives for the least trusted profession. After a slight rise in trust in politicians during the New Labour years, albeit never above 25%, the MPs' expenses crisis in 2009 saw it fall to a **low of 13%**. In 2023, even that nadir was breached, with only 9% reporting trust in politicians generally and 10% saying the same about government ministers.

Other democracies offer few clues about how to address this trust deficit. **A (2021) survey** of 22 leading democracies found that, on average, only 41% trusted their national government, with the UK ranking poorly on 35%. Majority trust in national government was only found in Norway, Finland, Luxembourg and Ireland. If you wanted to pick a country to try to emulate, it would have to be Norway, which consistently tops **global league tables** for democratic quality. Some 90% of Norwegians consistently report they are **satisfied with democracy**. But the UK is not, and cannot be, Norway and even warnings of the **decay of Norwegian democracy** have intensified in recent decades.

We do, at least, understand why trust in democracy is in decline. A **recent IPPR report** distinguished between two key sets of factors. The first concerns the performance of government: what government delivers, from the state of the economy to the quality of public services. A widening gap between what citizens expect from government and what they experience is undermining trust. The second set of factors concerns the process of government: how government operates and whether citizens perceive it to be consistent with

democratic norms. Growing frustrations about being unable to influence government decision-making and about the integrity of that decision-making, add to the gap between expectation and reality, and further undermine trust.

If you skipped to the end, here's that faint glimmer of hope. Buried in the gloom, there are two important distinctions to be drawn. First, the demise of trust applies overwhelmingly to elected officials. Other core democratic institutions, notably **the judiciary**, exhibit far higher levels of trust. Some, like the **civil service**, are trusted to a much greater degree than 40 years ago. Second, trust in **local government** and in local politicians is higher than trust in national government and national politicians. These contrasts hold true in the UK and in the great **majority of democracies**.

These distinctions matter. While the public is evidently frustrated with democracy, they have not given up on it. If elected representatives can show they are able to respond to public opinion and deliver on public expectations, there is a route to restoring trust. Devolving power to nations, regions and localities has been advocated as **a means of closing the trust gaps** in the UK. Empirical evidence from countries as diverse as **Ukraine** and **South Korea** suggests that decentralisation can increase trust in government.

We have seen in the UK how sub-national political leaders could be pivotal to restoring trust. In the later stages of the Covid pandemic, political leaders in areas with devolved government enjoyed significantly **higher trust ratings** than their Westminster

equivalents. The directly-elected Mayors for Liverpool City Region and **Greater Manchester** won large personal majorities in 2021 on the back of their respective roles in representing the North West's city regions.

One set of low turnout mayoral elections doesn't make a panacea. For devolved democracy to help turn trust around will require a step-change in ambition and resourcing. Brave and talented political leaders will need to step forward. The centre will need to let go. Mistakes will be made, some of them huge. Institutional solutions will have to be found for the large parts of England which lack combined authorities and to address local authorities teetering on the verge of **financial collapse**. We are a very long way from a blossoming of political trust. But, where power has been devolved, the seeds are at least being sown. The new breed of city regional politicians in Liverpool and beyond have taken on their roles because they **relish the challenge of delivering** against a democratic mandate. If they succeed, it will give political trust a much-needed shot in the arm.

Author biography

Stuart Wilks-Heeg is Professor of Politics at the University of Liverpool. He has written widely on UK elections, local government and local politics and was the Director of the Democratic Audit of the UK from 2009-2013.

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The Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place is an interdisciplinary public policy research institute which brings together academic expertise from across the University of Liverpool with policy-makers and practitioners to support the development of sustainable and inclusive cities and city regions.

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