



Economic Strategy

2025–2035

**Bristol's Economy of Tomorrow:
Our Delivery Themes and Priorities**

**Drive Business Growth
and Innovation**



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Drive Business Growth and Innovation

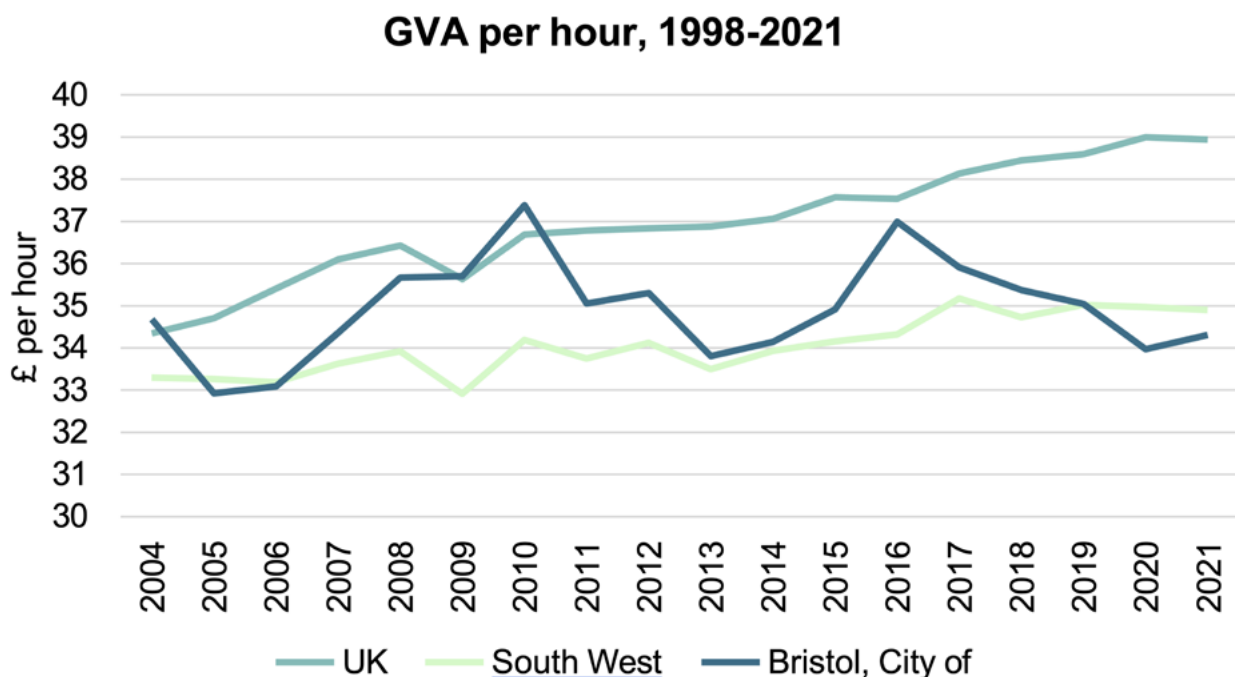
We will support businesses to thrive by driving inclusive business growth and innovation. Strengthened enterprise and Research & Development infrastructure should be accessible at the right time and provide tailored solutions to meet employers’ needs and connect innovation assets to local sectors and communities.

Bristol is home to a strong enterprise ecosystem, with our business base expanding by 11% between 2015 and 2022.⁸⁰ This growth has been largely driven by the birth of micro-enterprises, which made up 87% of the business base in 2022. Our most successful start-up sectors have consistently been in real estate and professional services, wholesale and retail, transport storage and communication. Over the last year however, Bristol has been on a downward trend for the number of new start-ups – 12.9% fewer starts in 2024 compared to 2023. Support to

maintain a dynamic and resilient SME base is vital to the economic success of the city.⁸¹

Despite our reputation as a high-performing city, Bristol’s productivity gap with the UK average is widening, and the city is now less productive than it was in 2004. This gap spans multiple sectors and calls for cross-sector solutions that will strengthen the foundations of our economy, support our areas of expertise, and ensure all residents have access to economic opportunities.

Figure 10. Trends in Bristol’s productivity



⁸⁰ UK Business Counts, IDBR (2023).

⁸¹ BankSearch, Bristol City of Start Ups Report (2024).

Our sector specialisms, including immersive creative technologies, FinTech, Quantum, and Energy and Environmental technologies, will drive future growth and create significant employment opportunities for our city. The development and delivery of the Local Industrial Decarbonisation Plan (LIDP) by the West of England Industrial Cluster (WEIC), primarily focused on Portbury, Avonmouth, and Severnside, will grow Bristol’s reputation for leading on the green agenda and help us achieve our Net Zero targets while supporting local business growth. There is an opportunity to explore the potential of the council’s extensive property portfolio (managed through the Corporate Landlord Service), to contribute to the delivery of this agenda, for example through the development of a green industrial park at Hallen Marsh.

Our business support offer, delivered through a robust provider network, is pivotal in linking local businesses to advisory and financial resources and technical support. Coupled with our world-class innovation ecosystem—comprising incubators, science parks, and catapults such as Engine Shed, Bristol SETsquared Centre, National Composites Centre, and Bristol Robotics Laboratory—we have firm foundations as a leading city to start and grow a business. Our two universities are central to this innovation ecosystem, with the University of Bristol ranking 7th among UK universities in the number of spinouts between 1998 and 2018, and 5th in spinout value.⁸²



82 Source Advisors, Universities spinout report (2021).

Our priorities to deliver a Fair Bristol:

- Improve our business startup, scale up and survival rates, enabling entrepreneurs in deprived areas and groups underrepresented in entrepreneurship to access tailored support.
- Work with our business support ecosystem and VSCE sector to strengthen our enterprise and early growth support offer in South Bristol.
- Agree and implement an affordable workspace policy for our designated Areas of Growth and Regeneration in line with the Local Plan, ensuring there is sufficient and accessible workspace across the city.
- Work with our business support providers and the Growth Hub to design support services which increase access to finance, trading, & supply chain opportunities for local micro businesses and SMEs.

Our priorities to deliver a Green Bristol:

- Work with Bristol City Leap and the Growth Hub to encourage SMEs to take up local green business support, including green business grants and net zero action planning.
- Stimulate innovation-led green growth by providing targeted support focused on clean energy, advanced low carbon manufacturing, circular economy technologies, sustainable construction and retrofit.
- Support the development of a green industrial park at Avonmouth as proposed by the concept study linked to the Local Industrial Decarbonisation Plan for the area, and in collaboration with BCC and City Leap.
- Work with our regional partners to develop a long-term strategy and interventions to boost the resilience and growth of the local food & drink and hospitality sectors - with a strong focus on Bristol's diverse food producers and entrepreneurs.

Our priorities to deliver a Thriving Bristol:

- Monitor the health and composition of our sectors and engage with our diverse business base to identify unmet financial and/or advisory support needs and co- design evidence based responsive services and secure funding for delivery.
- Work with Invest Bristol and Bath and regional partners to support cluster growth for emerging specialisms (Quantum and AI, health and life sciences) and existing sectors (including FinTech, low carbon and creative industries), focusing on new projects and funding.
- Work with our Universities, regional partners and specialist providers to strengthen and expand our innovation ecosystem, drawing from the Connected Catapult approach to inclusive innovation.