



Economic Strategy

2025–2035

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

**Unlock Skills for our
Future Economy**



Unlock Skills for our Future Economy

Our aim is to prepare local people with the skills for our future economy and to access good jobs. As work patterns continue to evolve, we must prioritise core transferable skills and behaviours across our workforce, whilst enhancing digital capabilities to empower our residents to seize new opportunities.

Whilst Bristol boasts a highly qualified working-age population, 14% of our businesses reported vacancies due to skill shortages in the 2022 Employer Skills Survey, a figure higher than other core cities.⁹¹ Insight from our evidence review and engagement revealed that employers across the city are struggling to hire individuals with the necessary skills – including both foundational and advanced digital skills. The 2023 West of England Local Skills Improvement Plan also identifies critical skills shortages in priority sectors such as advanced manufacturing and engineering, construction, health and social care, and the creative industries.⁹²

Bristol’s Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning Plan (2024 – 2030) identifies priority areas that the council and its partners will focus on over the coming years to tackle the skills challenge, including through the provision of careers information, advice and guidance and the Inclusive Career Pathways programme.⁹³ We need to ensure that our growth sectors, as well as our foundational economy, are able to access the skills they need.⁹⁴ By working with businesses and our workforce to adapt to the changing demands of the job market we will be able to drive growth and improve our productivity as a city.

The landscape of work has shifted rapidly. There is an increased demand in Bristol for flexible working

arrangements, an increasing trend towards portfolio careers (where people have multiple part-time jobs or freelance projects) and higher levels of entrepreneurship. National shortages in hospitality, health, and social care are straining our foundational sectors and front-line service jobs. Initiatives like the Health and Social Care Inclusive Career Pathway programme will be crucial to supporting our employers and championing diverse career pathways, as well as supporting our young, older, and vulnerable residents who will play an important role in the future of our communities.

Bristol businesses have told us they would like to take a leading role in raising aspiration within the communities where they are located, through showcasing the range of local job opportunities and routes to access, in order to support the development of home-grown talent across all of our communities. We want to harness this enthusiasm and collaborate with businesses to ensure they are not just employers but active partners in community development, working together to uplift local talent, foster long-term career growth, and create a more equitable and prosperous city. From school outreach programmes to engaging with our tech hubs and spinouts, businesses can play their role in ensuring we have a workforce ready for the future.



91 Department for Education, Employer Skills Survey (2022).

92 Business West, West of England Local Skills Improvement Plan (2023).

93 Bristol City Council, Employment, Skills and Lifelong Learning Plan 2024 – 2030 (2024).

94 The foundational economy refers to sectors providing essential goods and services, such as health and social care, food, housing, energy, utilities, construction, and retail, which are crucial for societal well-being and economic growth.

Table 3. Estimated number of jobs in green sectors in Bristol by 2030

Estimated Jobs	Number	% of estimated total green jobs
Low-carbon electricity	3,617	41%
Low-carbon heat	1,314	15%
Alternative fuels	305	3%
Energy Efficiency	1,202	14%
Low-carbon services	1,239	14%
Low emission vehicles & infrastructure	1,158	13%

Local Government Association estimates suggest that to achieve Net Zero by 2030, an estimated 50,383 new jobs will be needed across all sectors in the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority region, with 48% of these jobs located in Bristol. Green sectors will be pivotal, with 41% of the new jobs focused on low-carbon electricity.⁹⁵ The South Bristol Skills Academy at Hengrove, part of the City of Bristol College, has developed specialist courses focused on green skills and construction.

As our green economy grows, we will need to work with skills providers to ensure that the right provision is available, in the right places to ensure that local people are able to access and take advantage of the opportunities available here. Investing in and developing our construction workforce will be key to delivering the significant development and regeneration opportunities in the city over the next decade, including addressing our housing needs, along with the need for retrofit and sustainable construction. This will mean supporting our existing workforce to retrain, as well as ensuring that the next generation of workers have the skills they need to succeed.

Business engagement, particularly with those around Avonmouth, has highlighted the scale of investment required to expand our green capabilities and ensure a just transition across sectors. To realise our green ambitions, we must strengthen green capabilities within businesses and equip our residents with the skills needed for the transition to a green economy. This investment is crucial to unlocking and delivering investment in the city and ensuring a pipeline of skilled workers that meets the demands of green sectors.

We need long-term commitments, and funding, to ensure that businesses and employers have the confidence to invest in this transition and ensure we have a workforce that is fit for the future.



Our priorities to deliver a Fair Bristol include:

- Build on the Inclusive Career and Talent Pathway programmes targeting sectors and neighbourhoods – with a focus on sectors identified in our regional Local Skills Improvement Plan and Bristol Employment Skills and Learning Plan including health and social care, logistics, hospitality & food.
- Use our role in the Bristol Temple Quarter LLP to support the implementation of the Bristol Temple Quarter Inclusive Growth Strategy. Ensuring the jobs pipeline linked to phased development informs local skills provision, enabling access to jobs for local residents.
- Champion and support the adoption of basic digital skills, including working with partners to tackle digital exclusion and ensure communities have access to devices, resources, and digital infrastructure.
- Develop an employer ambassador programme to promote local employment opportunities (in education and employment support settings) to improve social mobility and reduce workforce shortages.

Our priorities to deliver a Green Bristol include:

- Work with industry leaders and key employers to identify those roles which are likely impacted by sector transitions as we move to greener economic growth, and work with local partners to provide early guidance and training on up-skilling and re-skilling.
- Work with City Leap, Future Leap, SevernNet and city partners to launch a Bristol Green Skills Academy to stimulate a local pipeline of skills required to meet Net Zero targets and support residents to access green jobs.

Our priorities to deliver a Thriving Bristol include:

- Strengthen Bristol’s position as a Centre of Excellence for Film, TV and Animation, connecting digital, animation and creatives, and maximising opportunities to build local talent pipelines and accessible start up space.
- Work with universities and further education partners to develop inclusive skills programmes that address underrepresentation in growth-driving sectors like finance, professional services, scientific and technical activities, and advanced manufacturing.
- Collaborate with developers and skills providers to create skills pathways, including apprenticeships, to meet the needs of our construction sector and support the transition to more sustainable construction practices.
- Engage with industry to understand emerging digital skills needs and support the development of training provision which enables employers to adopt AI and equip residents to benefit from digital transformation.