

# Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny

Inclusive Growth Pillar Update  
15 October 2025



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This update is for the Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Committee, focussing on the Inclusive Growth Pillar of Plymouth Economic Strategy.

Inclusive Growth is one of four pillars of the Strategy.  
Skills is a cross-cutting theme.

In 2024, we updated the Committee with the Economic Intelligence behind the Pillar. This report focusses on the Delivery Plan and the projects where the Inclusive Growth Pillar is the lead. We also touch on the planned integration of the pillar delivery across the wider projects.

All projects in the PES Delivery Plan where Inclusive Growth is the primary pillar, are in progress and are delivering as planned.



## 2. CONTEXT

We think of Inclusive Growth as enabling everyone to contribute to and to benefit from the economy. Since the Plymouth Economic Strategy was approved work has commenced on **the Building Bridges to Opportunity framework** which takes a systems approach to tackling poverty in Plymouth. The Inclusive Growth pillar is supporting an employer focus on setting an environment where people 'Can lift themselves out of poverty' and 'Don't fall into poverty'.

Plymouth Economic Strategy Inclusive Growth Pillar seeks to ensure that everyone benefits from Plymouth's economic growth, however, to support delivery three key target audiences have been identified:

- people with caring responsibilities,
- people with health challenges and
- people living in the most deprived neighbourhoods.

Women feature heavily within each of these demographics. Income and economic participation are key themes across the three groups. The wider protected characteristics often add additional challenges to economic participation, and we recognise that life stages from early childhood, throughout education and throughout adulthood affect the challenges of economic participation.

Measures behind Plymouth's inequalities are focussed on the "stubborn statistics", where the numbers in Plymouth are disproportionate to regional or national measures and trends are worsening. For our three target audiences these are:

- Women's low wages - 46.2% of women earn below a weekly Real Living Wage of £466 per week (£12.60 per hour).
- High Economic inactivity due to long term sickness – 13,600 people in December 2024
- Indices of Multiple Deprivation – 46,000 people across 28 Lower Super output areas in 7 Wards of the city.

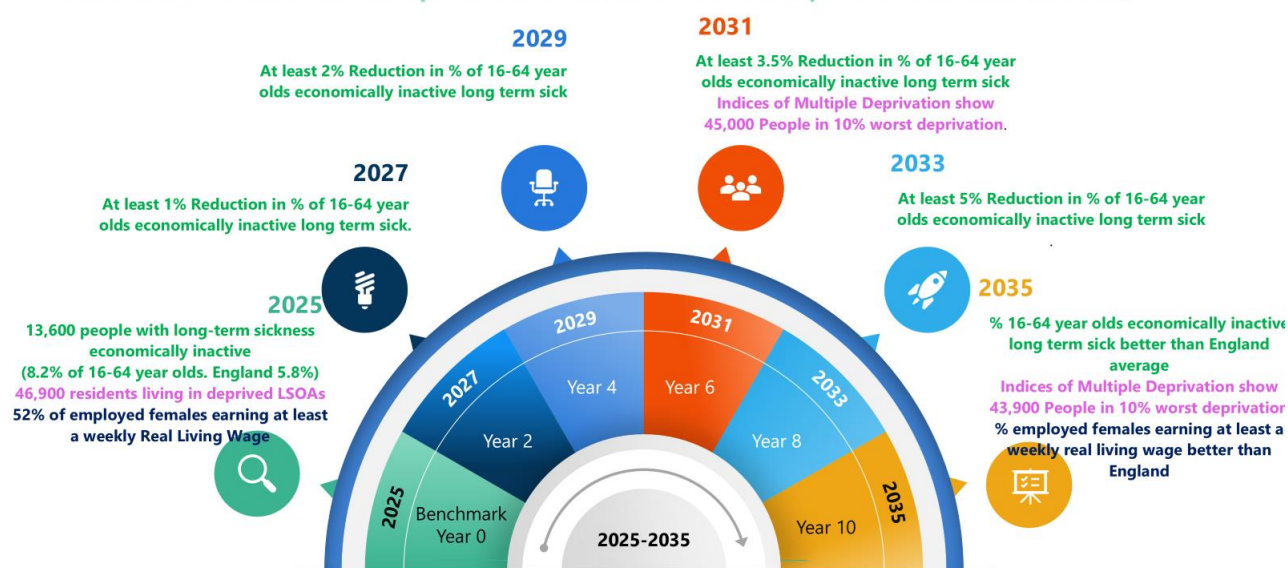
To tackle these measures of inequality, the Plymouth Economic Strategy has set aspirations for 2035 to work towards. In particular:

- 3000 people in the 28 communities in the lowest decile of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation improve towards 2nd decile
- Help 5000 economically inactive people into work, particularly impacting on the people who are long term sick
- 8000 new jobs
- 5000 people gain their first qualifications 22,000 more people with RVQ4 qualifications resident in the city
- 1000 new businesses
- CO2 emission reductions to achieve net zero

Whilst having its own work programme, a key part of the Inclusive Growth pillar is to work across all pillars and partners to ensure that inclusive growth is baked into their work programmes, more information on this can be found in section 5.

OFFICIAL

## 10 Year Plan to improve Stubborn Inequalities (Component 1)



Classification: UNCLASSIFIED  
UNCLASSIFIED

### 3. ECONOMIC STRATEGY DELIVERY PLAN – INCLUSIVE GROWTH PILLAR PROJECTS

The following projects are assigned under the Inclusive Growth Pillar of the Strategy.

- A. Championing Good Business Models
- B. Increasing Accessibility of Local Jobs
- C. Empowering the Community Sector
- D. Building Pathways to Employment

An update of each of these is given below.

#### A. Championing Good Business Models – led by Plymouth City Council

##### Partners and other key stakeholders

Plymouth Growth Board and other businesses who are taking action to improve income and levels of economic activity for the target audiences as identified in the Growth Strategy

##### Summary

This project will transition the Plymouth Charter to an Impact Network, so that people in our target communities will see local employers and their employees as allies in providing routes out of poverty.

There are lots of businesses in Plymouth who are working individually and through strong, collective approaches to improve the benefits of the economy for those who face challenges and disadvantage to achieving their optimum and economic participation. We will help all of them to understand the priorities for action. As a result, the economy will offer better access to good jobs for a wide range of different skill types and levels with flexibility to support people from the target audiences.

##### Work in Progress

1. A Dashboard will be published in the first quarter of 2026. This will provide economic intelligence that supports more detailed understanding of the economic challenges for the three target audiences. It will be republished annually to support progress towards the aspirations.
2. Cllr Penberthy has convened a Cabinet working group to lead on addressing the 'stubborn statistics' women are facing and how to address these. As a first stage the Council has funded Action for Children to employ a Community Builder to better understand these issues through working with women with lived experience working in Stonehouse and Devonport. The outcomes of this work will inform further developments in the Skills programme and subsequent activity with employers.
3. Plymouth Impact Network will launch in the first quarter of 2026.
4. A social impact menu is being discussed with business networks across the city. It aims to respond to the frequently asked question "What can only businesses do to overcome accessibility barriers for our 3 target audiences." It includes activities such as providing Work Experience, paying the Real Living Wage and supporting community activities.
5. A Social Impact and Social Value Portfolio was produced for local suppliers to the Crown Estates Floating Offshore Wind Development round 5 procurement and for the Heat Networks procurement. It presents suppliers with background information on our 3 target audiences, strategic community organisations, and the social impact menu.
6. A Community Projects Menu is under development, led by the large Anchor organisations (discussed below). The intention is that it will enable community organisations to advertise

opportunities for businesses to work with them to impact the economic challenges of the three target audiences.

## B. Increasing Accessibility to Local Jobs

### Partners and other key stakeholders

The Large Anchor Collaboration - Plymouth City Council, Babcock, University of Plymouth, University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust. The Group is aligned to Team Plymouth.

### Summary

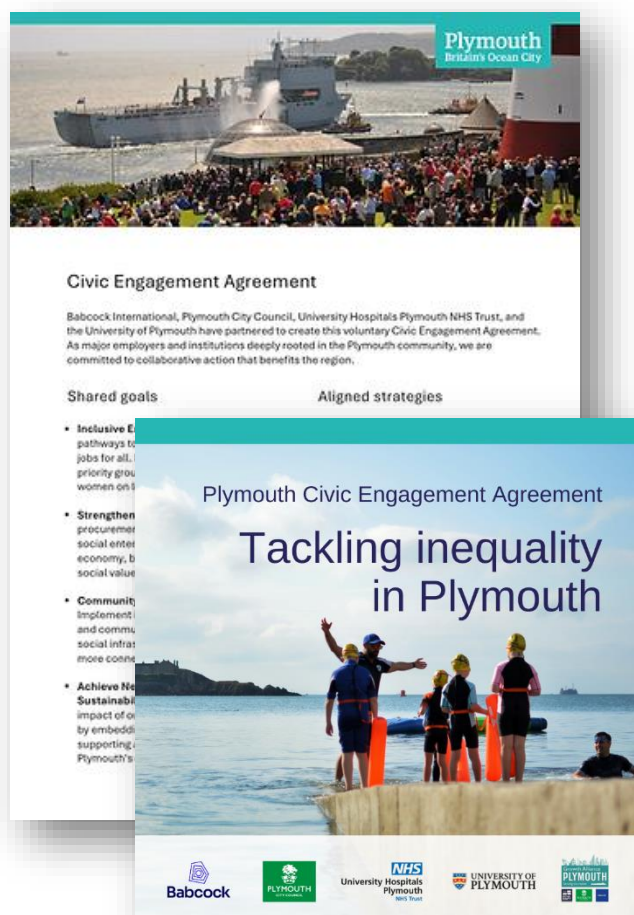
The mission is to be ambitious in using collaboration to leverage collective resources and expertise, and in making it easier, both for businesses to have a meaningful impact; and for the local communities to connect with and to access support from volunteer time and sponsorship

By measuring impact and scaling what works, we'll stay focused on outcomes that change our stubborn inequalities. All businesses will be able to contribute and to demonstrate their social impact.

Social innovation will be driven by our largest anchor organisations as part of the Team Plymouth programme, to reshape our economy so that well paid work is accessible to all regardless of health conditions, caring responsibilities or socio-economic status.

### Work in progress

1. The Civic Engagement Agreement was signed by the 4 organisations and published in June. It sets out the goals, vision, mission, objectives and values of the group.
2. Commitment to three workstreams of Workforce, Supply Chain and Community
3. Repository of community social impact activities for local businesses as well as suppliers in Social Value supply chains
4. Alignment of local spend prioritisation to support of clustering and supplier development. Early discussions suggest:
  - a. 3 areas of significant out-of-region spend by multiple buyers
  - b. Intellectual Property generating Information Technology – aligned with the Culture Strategy
  - c. Professional, Technical and Scientific Sector to address the gap in high value jobs supporting flexible working that exists in the city.
5. A shared understanding of the way in which the legislative requirements of 'Social Value' for use in procurement are used in Plymouth and a commitment to aligning their benchmarking measures for local and regional spend and SME spend.
6. A Parents Page that brings together information about parental workplace rights
7. An outreach programme for improved coverage of engagement and recruitment activity
8. Babcock hosted a stand for the organisations to collaborate at Devonport Open days.



The work on social value is particularly important given the large amounts of public funding currently flowing into the city in defence and health. If we get this right, there is a massive upside for the city that can be characterised in 4 main areas:

1. Local spend
2. Local skills development
3. Local employment
4. Actions to tackle climate/environment emergency

This work is being replicated in the Councils procurement and commissioning teams.

### **C. Empowering Community Sector**

#### Partners and other key stakeholders

PSEN; POP, Plymouth Culture, Nudge Community Builders; Real Ideas, FGCT, Millfields CEDT, Wolseley Trust; Plymouth City Council and local communities

#### Summary

Plymouth has a long history of embedding economic development capacity in local communities through the creation of Community Economic Development Trusts (CEDTs) and community asset transfers. The project will ensure support to the CEDTs. This includes creating a Land Exchange to reduce barriers to community ownership of local assets, attract investment and implement the Community Right to Buy.

#### Work in progress

1. Real Ideas is leading on creating a CreaTech quarter in Devonport, working with the creative and cultural sector and bringing a wider range of high value jobs to Devonport.
2. Millfields Trust continues its programme of asset development, building on the business infrastructure and supporting the local community through programmes such as Millfields Inspired and the development of Millfields Trust in the Community.
3. Four Greens Community Trust continues to use its physical assets to underpin community projects.
4. Community Builders are working through a commissioned programme in partnership with the NHS to support better community outcomes
5. Plymouth Energy Community is working with Plymouth City Council on a joint venture to develop the Chelson Solar Farm.

### **D. Building Pathways to employment – Led by Babcock**

#### Partners and other key stakeholders

Plymouth City Council, skills providers, employers, local VCSE organisation

#### Summary

Given the large numbers of new defence jobs, it is essential that we widen access to these new roles for all Plymouth residents. The project will support a range of activities to increase the visibility of job opportunities in defence and manufacturing and build effective pathways for all, particularly focusing on deprived wards and people not in work. This will be universal, but with a specific focus on young people who are NEET and those SEND.

#### Work in Progress

1. In 2025, Babcock welcomed its largest ever early careers intake, with 242 apprentices and 139 graduates/undergraduates, the vast majority of whom are based at Devonport Royal Dockyard.

2. 27 apprenticeship programmes are offered across engineering, digital, and business disciplines, with inclusive recruitment pathways for underrepresented groups.
3. Multiple T-Level students on placements
4. 36 pre-apprentices based at City College
5. Neurodiversity focus:
  - Neurodiversity provision, offers support, guidance, and screening and assessment for diagnosed or suspected neurodivergent staff and managers.
  - Neurodiverse Plymouth Employers Network NPEN, is a multi-employer and authority forum to discuss improving the support for neurodivergent employees and young people. NPEN engage in schools' awareness and employer best practice.
  - Neurodiversity internship week for students from local universities to experience working at the dockyard, work on a real problem faced on site and present their findings to senior staff. This year the internship was taken up by 20 students.
  - Neurodiversity network with over 300 members, where staff can share experiences, seek advice and share stories. The network also partners with the business to champion improvements and raise awareness.
  - Babcock produced evidence at the house of Lord's review of the autism act.
6. Babcock led the development of the Civic Agreement which was signed with the other large anchor organisations in June.
7. As part of TEAM Plymouth the programme will create a joined-up approach across the city on employment and social Value.
8. Work with Argyle Community Trust and specifically Foulston Park Community Hub and with Devon Chamber as patron, and RNRMCA Armed Forces Charity will further this work.

#### 4. TEAM PLYMOUTH

Each of the Inclusive Growth led projects will contribute to establishing a framework for impactful delivery through Social Value Procurement. This framework will contribute to the success of Team Plymouth's Social Value workstream.

Team Plymouth was launched on 19<sup>th</sup> September as the successor to the Growth Alliance Plymouth. Inclusive Growth and Social value are embedded across the programme. Explicit references include:

##### Vision

Our Vision is to maximise the opportunity for defence investment to support Continuous-At-Sea-Deterrent whilst driving sustainable and **inclusive growth**, encouraging innovation, and building opportunities extending well beyond Plymouth city boundaries into the region.

##### Purpose

Our purpose is to drive sustainable and **inclusive growth** from long term defence investment. We will achieve this through delivering the following missions: strong foundations; drive economic growth; regeneration and attraction; **break down barriers to opportunity**.

##### Missions

Break down barriers to opportunity

Maintain a clear focus on skills from pre-16 education through to post-16 skills. This will raise attainment and achievement amongst our school children while building skills to enable everyone to take advantage of the opportunities that growth will bring.

##### Key Outcomes

Address the skills and workforce gap and remove barriers to employment.

Address stubborn inequalities and inter-generational factors undermining social mobility.

#### The Evidence Base

At present, the city cannot meet the current workforce demand and does not have the sufficiently skilled labour market due to an ageing population, a legacy of poor educational attainment, a high percentage of people not in work due to health reasons and losing skilled workers to other areas in the UK.

#### Business Innovation and Marine Autonomy

Support an innovation ecosystem, enabling the wider business community to seize opportunities arising from the defence supply chain and enable small and medium enterprises to access defence contracts.

#### Skills

Accelerate the pace and volume of the regional Connect to Work programme with a focus on tackling underemployment and supporting individuals in accessing work.

Enhance funding for upskilling opportunities including:

- A Skills Brokerage Service to help individuals enhance their capabilities, improve career prospects, and access higher-paying roles.

Support the establishment of a Plymouth Skills charter, developed in collaboration with trade unions and key stakeholders, to ensure inclusive and fair access to skills development.

#### Education (pre-16)

Invest in expanding childcare and family hub facilities in the city's deprived communities, giving young children a stronger start in life and supporting early development.

Priority support for initiatives that support those facing disadvantage and the impacts of poverty, ensuring inclusive access to opportunities and resources.

#### City Centre, Housing and Regeneration

Support putting culture at the heart of the city, driving investment, job creation and a stronger cultural offer. Establish culture and creative clusters to raise the visibility of the sector, enabling businesses to co-locate and benefit from proximity to skills, customers and knowledge.

Support enhanced health and care access for city centre residents, building on the momentum of the newly launched Community Diagnostics Centre to address health and care inequalities.

#### Social Value delivering impact

Support an ambition to set a national standard for delivering Social Value, delivering social impact, transforming communities and lives.

Support establishment of 5-10 pilot projects, delivered through social value procurement.

## **5. INCLUSIVE GROWTH SUPPORTING OTHER PILLARS**

Our aim is to incorporate inclusive growth activity across all the pillars of the Economic Strategy. The four projects above, listed in the Plymouth Economic Strategy Delivery Plan under the Inclusive Growth pillar, set the framework to apply inclusive growth activities more widely. A further 18 projects have highlighted Inclusive Growth as a secondary pillar. These projects will include inclusive growth opportunities - as part of their delivery and monitoring plan.

With Inclusive Growth cited as the driver of the city's wider growth plans and goals, it is critical that each Economic Development Delivery Plan project team can understand, access and implement the right tools to deliver and measure their social impact measures.



By using:

- The Social Impact Menu, teams will be able to pick the most impactful outcomes and target audiences
- The Community Projects List will enable delivery alongside the right partner, already embedded in the community and
- The Inclusive Growth Dashboard will provide a city-wide measurement tool, a framework to test activities and showcase the power of focused social impact activities.

All this will harness the power of businesses and communities across the city and will be online and in person through educational, sharing and event activities by the Plymouth Impact Network (PIN).

The table below shows projects where other pillars are the lead, but Inclusive Growth is a secondary pillar, therefore highlighting the opportunities to work together.

<b>Investable Theme</b>	<b>Productive Growth &amp; High-Value Jobs</b>	<b>Civic Pride &amp; Regeneration</b>	<b>Sustainable Growth</b>
<b>Defence Sector and Devonport</b>	<b>Devon Chamber of Commerce</b> - Supporting local supply chain initiatives <b>City College Plymouth</b> - Developing the skills work with Babcock and the MoD	<b>Real Ideas</b> - Establishing Devonport as a 'Creative Cluster'	<b>Plymouth City Council</b> – Heat Networks
<b>The Waterfront and Maritime</b>		<b>Plymouth City Council</b> - Completing the delivery of the major capital investments	
<b>The Heart of the City Centre</b>		<b>Plymouth City Council</b> - Regenerating the West End	
<b>The North of the City</b>		<b>Plymouth City Council</b> - Supporting our start-ups and Entrepreneurs (city-wide)	<b>Plymouth City Council</b> – Heat Networks
<b>Skills</b>	<b>City College Plymouth</b> - Levering existing resources to address skills priorities - Building provider capacity  <b>University of Plymouth</b> - Building recruitment events	<b>Plymouth Culture</b> - Enhancing cultural education  <b>Homes England</b> - Establishing a Construction Taskforce	<b>Plymouth City Council</b> - Investing in Early Help - Supporting those furthest from the labour market - Developing skills brokerage - Increasing the number and quality of work experience - Accelerating the local belonging framework Retaining veterans



## **6. MONITORING:**

The Plymouth Economic Strategy will be monitored through the pillars. The intention is to keep this both light touch and outcome focused around the 10-year aspirations in the Plymouth Economic Strategy rather than trying to measure individual / cumulative outputs.

The monitoring will have two levels:

- Quarterly review of progress using a RAG rating system to cover: progress, barriers/issues, funding etc.
- Annual review of baseline data to report on cumulative progress, leading to annual update of Driving Growth brochure

The PCC officer lead for each pillar will gather the individual project RAG reports and liaise with the Political Pillar Lead and the External Pillar Lead on progress reporting.