

## **2030 vision for the Cambridge sub-region**

### **Topic summary: Economics and Technology**

#### **Our strengths and weaknesses**

- Our universities and hospitals are important for local growth: they provide buzz and knowledge exchange, and absorb economic shocks. The sub-region's prosperity is neither even nor robust – if its universities decline the impact will be huge.
- The dispersal of scientific activity to mono-functional peripheral enclaves such as West Cambridge and Addenbrookes diminishes the potential for interdisciplinary interaction.
- The Cambridge Cluster is chaotic but agile; it works because of the talent. The challenge is how to bring people together to make best use of its strengths: 3d printers, new polymers for electronics, stem cells etc. Complacency is a danger. Local aerospace and pharmaceutical industries are, to a degree, protected by defence and NHS requirements.
- There have been several transport infrastructure improvements over the past decade, but these tend to be undertaken at a very slow pace.

#### **Technology innovation, development and manufacture**

- Innovation, which flourishes in the sub-region, takes a long time to have an impact and does not result in much employment. It requires support from a balanced employment structure, not just jobs for the very talented (though house prices will inevitably favour the higher paid if our economy remains healthy). We cannot rely on maintaining existing jobs; new ones need to be continually created.
- One way of promoting innovation would be to jump to 4G in a sub-regional 'free zone' which would act as a test bed for mobile companies.
- It is unwise to push technology that is not ready, and it is not sufficient to support pure science. We need to encourage the skills to bring products to market successfully. This involves product development, design for manufacture, and marketing skills, together with finance availability, demanding creative and intellectual skills in which the sub-region is not strong. Its two FTSE 100 companies, Autonomy and ARM, have excelled here, though their products are embedded software, rather than hardware.
- Far more jobs are created by the use of technology than by its development. We cannot compete with low-cost manufacturing economies, but we might link up with another UK area (on the East Coast mainline and with access to EU funding) where Cambridge innovations could be manufactured as UK products.
- The Cambridge UK brand needs intensive and exemplary marketing internationally.

#### **Improving conditions in the sub-region: 2030 Vision**

- The sub-region is competing for talent in an international market. Quality of life is the key – failure to attract this talent will diminish that enjoyed by the existing inhabitants. There needs to be a far better public understanding of the form and nature of the sub-region, together with debate to secure community-wide support for the growth agenda.
- The sub-region's finer settlements and settings should be protected and celebrated.
- Infrastructure is needed to allow economic activity to be spread more widely around the sub-region (though even Cambourne finds it difficult to attract employers and the villages resist development). Towns in the sub-region must be made more welcoming and cleaner.
- People prefer to work in a lively, diverse city rather than outside it. Most want to meet their colleagues, rather than work from home, though cloud-based computing will enable federated working in locations spread over a wide area.
- As an alternative to densification, there is a view that there is plenty of land where telecommuting communities with a calm environment ideal for innovation could develop.
- Movement must be improved by better pedestrian and cycle routes, more cycle parking and controlled car speeds. A sophisticated road-pricing system is essential to ease congestion and generate money for public transport. Good rail connectivity with London is vital and Stansted must offer long-haul flights.
- Cultural and entertainment provisions need enhancing. Public space is a huge issue. Old and young need the stimulation of meeting in both formal and informal contexts.
- There is need of an auditorium large enough for conference plenary sessions, with nearby space for breakout groups..
- By 2030 pervasive control systems will be available at urban scale and, together with retrofitting, could reduce the carbon footprint by 40%. Nuclear rebuild is essential and it may be possible to install a micro-nuclear power station under city-centre green spaces. We have the opportunity to lead the world in green technology.
- Easy movement, good places, good schools and good healthcare are critical.