Downtown In Business

Downtown in Business Response to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Consultation on the Proposed Mayoral Development Corporation

Creating Liverpool's Next Great Waterfront Destination

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I Foreword

Liverpool has never lacked ambition.

From its proud maritime heritage to the transformation of the city centre, the renaissance of the waterfront, the success of Liverpool ONE and the emergence of world-leading sectors in advanced manufacturing, digital innovation, life sciences and the visitor economy, Liverpool has repeatedly demonstrated that when public and private sectors work together with a shared vision, remarkable things happen.

The proposal to establish a Mayoral Development Corporation for the area currently referred to as **Liverpool North Docks** presents another defining moment in the city's history.

Downtown in Business has consistently championed devolution, strong local leadership and genuine public-private sector partnership. We have argued for many years that decisions affecting our city regions are best made locally, with business playing a central role in shaping investment, regeneration and economic policy.

For that reason, we warmly welcome the proposal to establish a Mayoral Development Corporation.

However, new organisations do not create economic growth.

Delivery does.

Success will ultimately be measured by homes built, businesses created, jobs generated, infrastructure delivered and private investment secured.

That must remain the Corporation's overriding objective.

A Once-in-a-Generation Opportunity

The regeneration of Liverpool's northern waterfront represents one of Europe's most significant development opportunities.

Handled successfully, it has the potential to create a vibrant mixed-use district that attracts international investment, supports thriving neighbourhoods, creates thousands of skilled jobs and reinforces Liverpool's reputation as one of Britain's most dynamic city regions.

This should not simply become another regeneration scheme.

It should become the benchmark for modern, devolved, investment-led regeneration.

A Destination Needs More Than a Working Title

Downtown in Business fully understands why the consultation refers to the area as **Liverpool North Docks**.

However, we believe this should remain a planning description rather than become the long-term identity of the project.

The world's most successful regeneration schemes have become synonymous with strong place brands. Canary Wharf, MediaCity, Battersea Power Station and Liverpool ONE all succeeded because they represented destinations rather than development sites.

At the appropriate stage of the project, we encourage the Combined Authority to work alongside businesses, investors, cultural organisations, branding specialists and local communities to develop an international destination brand that reflects the ambition of this extraordinary opportunity.

Liverpool is not simply creating a new development.

It has the opportunity to create one of Europe's great waterfront destinations.

Business Must Help Shape the Future

The private sector will ultimately provide much of the investment that transforms this new waterfront district.

Developers, institutional investors, contractors, professional advisers, occupiers and entrepreneurs should therefore help shape strategic decision-making from the outset.

Downtown recommends that experienced private-sector leaders are represented within the governance arrangements of the Development Corporation.

Equally, the Corporation should seize the opportunity to broaden the range of commercial voices contributing to its work. Alongside established business leaders, appointments should reflect the diversity of Liverpool's economy by bringing forward emerging leaders, entrepreneurs and individuals with expertise in innovation, technology, sustainability, culture and investment.

A balance of experience and fresh thinking will help ensure the Corporation remains dynamic, commercially focused and forward-looking.

Planning Reform Must Mean Faster Decisions

Business consistently identifies delays within the planning system as one of the greatest barriers to investment.

The Development Corporation should establish itself as a model of efficient, transparent and commercially aware decision-making.

Clear planning performance targets, streamlined approval processes and early engagement with investors will send a powerful message that Liverpool is open for business.

Certainty creates confidence.

Confidence attracts investment.

Infrastructure Should Lead Development

Successful regeneration depends upon infrastructure.

Transport, utilities, digital connectivity, public realm, flood resilience and green infrastructure should not follow development—they should enable it.

Public investment should focus upon infrastructure capable of unlocking significantly greater levels of private-sector investment.

Every pound of public money should seek to maximise private capital.

Sandhills Station – The Front Door to Liverpool's New Waterfront

Downtown in Business believes the proposed boundary should be reviewed to include Sandhills Station and its immediate surroundings.

Every great urban district has a front door.

For Liverpool's new waterfront district, that front door is Sandhills.

It will provide the first impression for residents, commuters, visitors, football supporters, investors and businesses arriving by rail. Its quality, connectivity and integration with surrounding development will help define perceptions of the entire regeneration programme. Successful regeneration should be shaped by connectivity rather than administrative boundaries.

By incorporating Sandhills within the remit of the Development Corporation, the Combined Authority can ensure that this critical gateway is planned as an integral part of the wider vision, strengthening links between new neighbourhoods, Everton Stadium, employment areas and the wider Liverpool City Region transport network.

Developing the Workforce of the Future

Regeneration is about far more than buildings and infrastructure. It is ultimately about creating opportunity for people.

One of the biggest challenges facing construction, engineering, logistics, digital technology, advanced manufacturing and the low-carbon economy is the growing shortage of skilled workers. If the vision for Liverpool's new waterfront district is to be realised, workforce development must sit alongside physical regeneration as a core priority.

Downtown in Business recommends that the Development Corporation establishes a **Skills Compact** - a formal partnership bringing together employers, developers, contractors, education providers and public-sector partners to identify future workforce requirements, coordinate training provision and create clear pathways into employment for local people.

The Compact should be led in close partnership with the **City of Liverpool College**, whose exemplary engagement with business has established it as a national leader in employer-led skills development. Working alongside the city's private sector, universities and other training providers, the College is ideally placed to help ensure education and training provision evolves in line with the long-term needs of investors and employers.

The Skills Compact should forecast future skills demand, expand apprenticeships and work placements, promote higher technical qualifications, support mid-career retraining and ensure local residents are equipped to access the thousands of high-quality careers created by this transformational programme.

The lasting legacy of the Development Corporation should be measured not only by the buildings it creates, but by the opportunities it creates for future generations.

Local Businesses Must Share in Success

Major regeneration should benefit businesses across the Liverpool City Region.

The Corporation should commit to transparent procurement pipelines, simplified tendering processes, local supply-chain opportunities and meaningful SME engagement.

Economic growth is strongest when prosperity is shared.

A Global Investment Proposition

This project should be promoted internationally as one of Europe's premier regeneration opportunities.

Working alongside Invest Liverpool, Government and private-sector partners, the Development Corporation should actively showcase Liverpool's new waterfront district at international investment events, positioning the city alongside the world's leading destinations for urban regeneration and sustainable investment.

Liverpool's international brand is one of its greatest assets.

It should be used confidently.

Transparency and Accountability

The Corporation should publish annual performance measures covering:

- Private investment secured
- Homes completed
- Commercial floorspace delivered
- Jobs created
- Infrastructure projects completed
- Planning performance
- SME procurement
- Apprenticeships and skills outcomes
- Environmental and sustainability performance

Transparent reporting will strengthen confidence among investors, businesses and local communities alike.

Conclusion

Downtown in Business warmly welcomes the proposal to establish a Mayoral Development Corporation.

We believe it represents a bold expression of confidence in Liverpool's future.

However, this should be viewed as the beginning rather than the destination.

Liverpool has the opportunity to demonstrate how devolved leadership, commercial confidence and genuine public-private partnership can deliver transformational regeneration on an international scale.

This project should aspire to become more than a successful development.

It should become the UK's benchmark for modern urban regeneration and a blueprint for other city regions seeking to unlock economic growth through ambition, partnership and delivery.

Downtown in Business looks forward to working constructively with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Liverpool City Council, businesses, investors, education providers and local communities to help turn that ambition into reality.

About DIB

Downtown in Business is uniquely placed to contribute to this consultation because, for more than two decades, we have worked at the intersection of business, politics and economic development across Liverpool City Region and the UK's leading regional economies.

Through our extensive network of private-sector members, partnerships with local authorities, combined authorities, government departments, universities and further education institutions, DIB has developed a detailed understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with delivering large-scale regeneration projects. The organisation has consistently championed devolution, investment-led growth and effective public-private partnerships, recognising that successful places are created when government provides leadership and business brings investment, innovation and commercial expertise.

In Liverpool City Region, Downtown in Business has played an active role in supporting investment, promoting the city nationally and internationally, and facilitating dialogue between decision-makers and the private sector.

Through high-profile conferences, parliamentary receptions, policy roundtables, trade missions, business awards and major investment events such as MIPIM and UKREiiF, DIB has helped showcase Liverpool's economic strengths while providing a respected forum for debate on regeneration, planning, infrastructure, skills and economic growth. This submission is therefore informed not only by Downtown's long-standing commitment to the success of Liverpool City Region, but also by the practical insight and experience of the businesses, investors and civic leaders who will ultimately be responsible for turning the ambition of the Mayoral Development Corporation into reality.

Downtown in Business approaches this consultation as a constructive partner. We strongly support the ambition behind the proposed Mayoral Development Corporation and believe it has the potential to become a nationally significant model for regeneration. Our recommendations are offered in that spirit: to help ensure that Liverpool's new waterfront district becomes a globally recognised destination for investment, innovation, enterprise and sustainable economic growth, creating lasting opportunities for businesses, communities and future generations alike.

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