

What differentiates Liverpool from other UK cities?



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Heseltine Institute for Public
Policy, Practice and Place

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This paper was written by Colin Sinclair, CEO of KQ Liverpool and Sciontec, and Emily Cook, Policy Assistant at KQ Liverpool, with support from the Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place at the University of Liverpool.

Front Cover Image: Ben Blackall



Executive Summary



City differentiation is not a new phenomenon. Throughout history cities have claimed to be “different” and to have a competitive edge over other places. In centuries past, for instance, several UK cities, including Liverpool, made claims to being the “second city” of the Empire after London and more recently Birmingham and Manchester have positioned themselves as England’s second city.

In an increasingly competitive and globalised world, it has become more important for cities to better differentiate themselves from other cities as one way to attract investment and retain talent, both of which will be vital to post-pandemic economic recovery and renewal.

Some of the things that differentiate Liverpool today owe to the city's past. From the region's capabilities in infectious diseases and materials chemistry, being rooted in the establishment of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine in 1898 and the emergence, in the late nineteenth century, of what became Unilever. To the cultural legacy of the Beatles and the global sporting reputation of Liverpool Football Club.

Today, its innovation, people and culture are three key elements that make Liverpool different from other cities. Liverpool is a passionate city, with a diverse cultural and quality of life offer, and a growing knowledge economy which is driving forward the city's new era of regeneration. Liverpool can further capitalise on these differences by ensuring the region's innovation strengths are better communicated to and understood by all audiences – from government and investors, to local people. There is a need to continue thinking about how innovation can be more inclusive. Resolving health inequalities,

creating an inclusive economy with high value jobs and achieving net zero carbon are all within the city's grasp. Liverpool can also continue to leverage its cultural status, as it has since being European Capital of Culture over a decade ago, to pioneer and push the boundaries, to generate greater environmental, health and social impacts.

Recognising that the city's past, from the port to sport, has paved the way to some of Liverpool's current differentiators, the things that can make a difference in the future can also be rooted in what the city is excelling at now. From infectious diseases and the establishment of the Pandemic Institute, to the new Freeport status, and even greater ambitions in sports science, innovation and automation in materials chemistry, advanced manufacturing, robotics and artificial intelligence. Sustaining the levels of collaboration and partnership working in Liverpool that the pandemic has brought, with new synergistic linkages, will undoubtedly generate something which stands the city and region apart in the future. By adopting inclusive innovation we are creating the differentiators of the future today.

1.0

Liverpool – a city of opportunity

1.0 Introduction

Cities, regions and countries have long felt the need to differentiate themselves from each other, to “assert their individuality in pursuit of various economic, political, social and psychological objectives” (Oliveira, 2012, 1). Liverpool is no exception to this and is frequently referred to as being “different” from other cities. But what are the things that make Liverpool different and, in a positive sense, set it apart from other UK cities?

In the words of Professor Dame Janet Beer, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Liverpool:

“Liverpool is at once a village, a city, a regional hub and an international destination. It has ease of accessibility to the widest range of cultural organisations anywhere outside London and unparalleled quality of life for those who live and work in the region. Through its universities it offers access for industry and commerce to the highest quality education and research in the sciences, medicine – including tropical medicine – veterinary science, architecture and art and design. It is a centre of materials discovery, digital innovation and a growing hub for bioscience industries.”

Image of the Spine and Liverpool: AHR Architects

What differentiates Liverpool from other UK cities?

Chris Brown, Director of Marketing Liverpool, said

“Liverpool has a great story – but sometimes we struggle to cohesively articulate it” which is why he teamed up with Professor Michael Parkinson CBE, Dr Jon Hague of Unilever and the co-writer of this paper Colin Sinclair back in 2017 to write *The Liverpool Brand Anatomy*.

1.0 Introduction

Liverpool was, it said, “unconventional, resilient and able to reinvent itself in the face of adversity” (Parkinson et al 2017, 8). It concluded, however, that Liverpool needed to redefine its brand narrative. Better defining itself as a city of opportunity, a creative force for good, a pioneer and an innovator.

A city regenerated, since being the European Capital of Culture in 2008, by tourism and the visitor economy, and latterly arguably by its growing knowledge economy, the impact of the global pandemic has hit Liverpool's visitor and cultural economy hard. The knowledge economy is impacted too, with the double impact of Brexit and the “loss” of some international students throughout the pandemic. That loss isn't about applicant numbers, which remain strong, but rather the economic losses sustained from having remote lecturing and learning when compared to a thriving city full of students.

Michael Parkinson more recently said “if a city knows what it is good at going into a crisis, then it should concentrate on that to get itself out of it.” How fortunate then for Liverpool that the city had recognised strengths in infection and disease before Covid-19 hit and has gained recognition for its role in the fight back ever since. Liverpool's distinctive health and life sciences assets and capabilities are certainly key to its current efforts in combating the negative forces of the pandemic and driving forward future economic growth for the city. The launch of a world leading end-to-end Pandemic Institute in Liverpool in September of this year was a notable moment.

In the context of post-pandemic recovery, it is worth considering in more detail what else differentiates Liverpool from other UK cities. For there is more about Liverpool and its region, with its population of 1.6 million people, than simply infection and disease. This paper will therefore consider what else differentiates Liverpool and how we might capitalise on those points of difference to drive sustainable, inclusive growth and support Liverpool's economic recovery and renewal.

THE LIVERPOOL BRAND

WHAT IS IT & WHY DOES IT MATTER SO MUCH NOW?



Image: Agent Marketing

2.0

LIVERPOOL SCIENCE PARK

Methodology

In addition to a range of written sources, the contents of this paper is informed by the thoughts and insights of over 30 consultees¹ from across the City of Liverpool and the Liverpool City Region (LCR). Consultees included changemakers and senior leaders from a range of industries and organisations, all who had varying experiences of Liverpool.

From those who had grown up in the city or lived here for long periods, to those who live and work in other cities but have connections to Liverpool in some way. External views of the city were especially valuable to ensure that we were not being too inward looking and inadvertently “Liverpool centric.”

It is worth acknowledging from the outset that this paper is intended to highlight Liverpool's positive differentiators, and to that end, it risks giving an overly optimistic view of the city and city region. Within the LCR, there are stark inequalities in health, education and between communities which have only been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. This within a city that also lacks the commercial scale when compared to other major UK cities and a recovering political climate following the alleged corruption revelations of 2020. We are not simply ignoring these issues. But by better understanding Liverpool's strengths and capitalising on them, we can start to think about how the things that are differentiating Liverpool can help to address these inequalities and issues.

This paper will refer to both the City of Liverpool and the Liverpool City Region throughout – at times, interchangeably. This is because, whilst the city and city region have distinctive characteristics, they are a “patchwork of different areas pulled together with a common purpose.”² After all, “you can't have a thriving city region, unless you have a thriving city.”³ The two are inextricable, connected and integrated. And, although they serve various purposes and mean different things to different audiences, they are economically, geographically and socially connected in terms of their impact.

¹ A full list of consultees can be found in Appendix 10.1.

² Quote by Professor Janet Hemingway CBE.

³ Quote by Professor Michael Parkinson CBE.

Image of LSP: Ben Blackall

3.0

Why would Liverpool want to differentiate itself from other UK cities?

Cities are more similar than we would like to admit. Their foundations. Their infrastructure. The things that drive their economic growth. From their transport and housing, health and education, to their culture or people. Many of the same things characterise our cities. In a fiercely competitive and globalised world, differentiating a city is about identifying the things that truly set it apart and make it a place people want to live, work, study, invest and play (Parkinson 2018).

3.1 To attract investment

One of the reasons why Liverpool would want to differentiate itself from other UK cities is in order to attract investment. Whether Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Northshoring, Sovereign Wealth Funds, Property and Pension Funds or from Central Government, investment comes in many forms and is “essential for stimulating and maintaining economic growth” (Bailly and McDonald 2017, 1). Investment can lead to the creation of high-quality jobs; better talent attraction and retention; the upskilling of local workforces; and, the unlocking of urban regeneration allowing agglomeration to flourish (OECD 2008, 1 - 5).

Liverpool is well aware of its poor performance in successfully attracting investment and not receiving its “share of the pie” nationally. Looking at FDI figures alone, in 2020 just 9 FDI projects landed in Liverpool compared to 35 in neighbouring Manchester (EY 2021, 26 - 27). Evidently, Liverpool has more to do in order to “demonstrate the underlying strength of [its] offer to investors” particularly since the 2020 FDI results suggest that the message on Levelling Up is beginning to land in other places, with a strengthening in investor perceptions of the attractiveness of the UK’s nations and regions beyond London and the South East (EY 2021, 1 - 2).

In order to attract investment, cities “should focus on selling their strengths making sure the industry is aware of the city’s comparative advantages” (Bailly and McDonald 2017, 27). However, differentiating a city does not mean promoting generic “Unique Selling Points” that are not particularly unique (Esmi 2016, 4). “World-leading universities,” “good infrastructure” and a “talented workforce” - clichés all too well known within placebranding narratives and associated marketing materials both locally and beyond (Esmi 2016, 4). We must remember that we cannot be all things to all people. Such can lead to incoherent messaging and confuse a city’s offer to investors, occupiers, government and the general public alike. Differentiation must be authentic and based on areas where a city evidentially excels.

Image of Hope Street: Ben Blackall

3.0 Why would Liverpool want to differentiate itself from other UK cities?

3.2 To attract and retain talent

Differentiation is also crucial to attract and retain talent. Cities need people to thrive, being recognised as the “foundation of cities’ economic success” (Centre for Cities 2016, 3). And, part of a city’s magnetism rests in their ability to offer unique opportunities and favourable lifestyles, or at least to do so perceptually. Consider London. There is a deeply ingrained perception of London as being the city of opportunity for graduate talent. Yet evidence indicates that the “brain drain” to the South is based on perceptions that do not always stack up in reality, with London pulling in many more graduates than its share of jobs would suggest (Centre for Cities 2016, 23). So even though the opportunities might not always exist, graduates go to London because it is perceived as a route to success.

Whether because of its capital city status, historic legacy as the financial centre of the World or genuine strengths in offering diverse career opportunities, London has been able to differentiate itself as a destination for talent. The case is not that cities outside the capital do not retain graduates, they just do not retain the majority of those who have chosen to move to their city to study (Centre for Cities 2016, 18). The LCR has a graduate retention rate of 41% compared to Greater Manchester’s 50% (Liverpool City Region Combined Authority 2020, 10).

There is certainly scope to improve the region’s graduate retention figures with schemes such as LCR Grad⁴, LJMU Graduate Futures⁵, and KQ Grad⁶ seeking to tackle this issue. In addition to other factors such as the quality of life offering, this largely relies on the opportunities being there in the first place. Consistent feedback from students demonstrates their desire to stay in the region after graduating, but they are forced to leave due to being unable to find sufficient graduate level jobs (Liverpool City Region Combined Authority 2020, 10). This also goes for students in local Further Education colleges too, with one example being the City of Liverpool’s Digital Academy which is training the next generation of leaders in the digital sector, but talent is being lost to other cities due to the lack of current opportunities in the region. In this way, attracting talent and investment is a cyclical process, both largely dependent on each other. A healthy talent pipeline is attractive to investors and high quality jobs are attractive to talent. Stronger differentiation will only be additive in our efforts to attract both to Liverpool.



Image of Graduates: LJMU

Talent is a key driver for attracting investment.



3.3 To support the post-pandemic recovery

Differentiating Liverpool, as just one way to attract investment and talent, is especially important now as we look to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. The social and economic impact of the pandemic has been immense. With the LCR being ranked as the most deprived of England’s 38 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas, Liverpool is one of several cities that was in need of Levelling Up pre-pandemic and now faces the added challenges of Covid (Liverpool City Council 2020, 5; Centre for Cities 2021, 30).

We have noted that two things which help a city’s economy to thrive are investment and talent. Two things which will support the region in its recovery. But these to some extent depend on successful city differentiation, and fully exploiting the benefits of those points of difference. In the age of companies downsizing, government funding cuts and people assessing their ways of working and living, cities will need to more competitively sell and better capitalise on their strengths in order to prosper, recover and help to tackle local inequalities.

The social and economic impact of the pandemic has been immense.

City differentiation can support the post-pandemic recovery.

⁴ LCR Grad is an ESF funded project designed to connect graduates within the LCR to SMEs.

⁵ LJMU Graduate Futures is an ESF funded project offering student internships, sandwich placements and graduate placements in LCR SMEs.

⁶ KQ Grad is a KQ Liverpool project intended to simultaneously improve graduate retention and attract investment by directly connecting inward investors into Liverpool’s graduate talent pipeline.

4.0

Acknowledging the past to understand the present

There is an undeniable link between the things that differentiate Liverpool today and the past. Whilst we must be cautious not to “live in the past,” especially given the negative connotations attached to Liverpool’s imperial and slave trading history, we need to acknowledge the city’s past, in order to understand its present.

4.1 From Sunlight soap to the SIA

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) sponsored Liverpool City Region+ Science and Innovation Audit, published in September 2017, identified three areas where the LCR has proven excellence in science and innovation (Liverpool Local Enterprise Partnership 2017, III). These include Materials Chemistry, Infectious Diseases and High Performance & Cognitive Computing (Liverpool Local Enterprise Partnership 2017, III). Since its publication, much of Liverpool’s positioning has centred around the specialisms outlined in the SIA and anecdotally⁷ these have only strengthened in recent years. The region’s history seems to have played a key role in shaping these specialisms.

Consider materials chemistry. In the mid 1880s, William Lever began producing a revolutionary type of household soap – Sunlight Soap – that helped to popularise cleanliness and hygiene in Victorian England (Unilever 2021). By the next decade, the Lever Brothers were selling nearly 40,000 tons of Sunlight soap with expansions in Europe, America and the British Colonies (Unilever 2021). In 1911, the Lever Brother’s first purpose-built research laboratory was constructed at Port Sunlight and, over time, it diversified into chemicals and packaging (Unilever 2021).

It’s no surprise then that today Liverpool’s strengths include materials chemistry, given Unilever’s global success and its legacy locally. A legacy which continues today with the Materials Innovation Factory (MIF) opening in 2018. Co-founded by the University of Liverpool and Unilever, the MIF is a purpose-built facility designed to exploit cutting edge technology and world-class expertise in materials chemistry (University of Liverpool (a) 2021). This collaboration, which further boosts Liverpool’s materials chemistry offer, is rooted in the region’s history, with Unilever consolidating it centuries before (Unilever 2021).

In a similar sense, Liverpool’s maritime heritage – with the world’s first commercial wet dock – has also paved the way to distinctive assets within the city region which position it as a leader in infectious disease research today. In the late 19th Century, as a result of Liverpool’s extensive overseas trading activities, the number of patients being admitted to hospital in the region with “tropical diseases” began to soar (LSTM 2021). In response to this, the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) was founded by influential shipping magnate Sir Alfred Lewis Jones in 1898 (LSTM 2021).

Image of Victoria Building: Ben Blackall

⁷ Several consultees suggested that the specialisms identified in the SIA have only strengthened over the past four years. There is an intention to formally update the SIA.

4.0 Acknowledging the past to understand the present

The first institution in the world dedicated to research and teaching in the field of tropical medicine, LSTM remains one of just two tropical schools in the UK today (LSTM 2021). A notable recipient of funding from the Gates Foundation, LSTM has greatly contributed to the city's recognised strengths in infection and disease, with iiCON⁸ most recently developing its offer further, working to create a leading global centre for infectious disease R&D, as part of an ambitious £173.4 million programme.



The Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine is a leader in infectious disease research

Image of LSTM: Ben Blackall

4.2 The Scouse identity and city solidarity

But it's not just its physical assets and strengths in science and innovation which differentiate Liverpool today. Part of the city's authenticity is its people and a distinctive Scouse identity. Perhaps pejoratively viewed by some as being loud, opinionated and going against the grain, the Scouse identity is also one of humour, hospitality and loyalty. And with that identity comes a huge passion and pride in place which often sees the city unite over common issues in order to disprove perceptions that remain warped outside the region and right wrongs. A unity seemingly the result of a historic sense of injustice which burdens Liverpool and is simply not shared by other English cities.

In the words of Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram, "when people go against us, we stick together." The roots of this Scouse togetherness can be traced back to the Hillsborough disaster and the tainted legacy of the Thatcher era, and is perhaps best exemplified by the mass boycotting of The S*n newspaper – a whole city effort. Whilst these are remembered as dark periods for Liverpool, they have shaped something which makes it distinctive today. A loyalty and shared identity which is generating positive change for the city, as will be discussed in Section 5.2.⁹

Part of the city's authenticity is its people.

⁸ iiCON is the Infection Innovation Consortium led by Professor Janet Hemmingway CBE of LSTM together with LUHFT, Unilever, UoL, Infex Therapeutics and Evotec. A collaborative partnership building on the strengths in infection in the wider region, the Consortium is accelerating and supporting the discovery and development of innovative new anti-infectives.

4.3 Culture today, and Yesterday

Culture is also recognised as something that sets Liverpool apart from other UK cities and, along with tourism, is one of the city's most important economic contributors. So how did culture and tourism become such an important economic driver for Liverpool? The Beatles undoubtedly played a huge role in putting the city on the global map and is undeniably something which makes Liverpool known around the world. The Beatles are resultantly a foundational part of our visitor economy. Whether to visit the Cavern Club on Mathew Street, Penny Lane or Strawberry Fields, it has been estimated that half of all international visitors come to the city at least in part because of the Fab Four (University of Liverpool et al 2016, 22). When last explored in 2016 it was also estimated that the gross economic impact of Beatle-related activity amounted to £210m turnover per annum and 5,990 jobs (University of Liverpool et al 2016, 22). Very few cities have the same pull power of being the hometown of one of the most successful bands of all time.

Founded in 1892, Liverpool Football Club (LFC) has similarly played a historic part in consolidating the city's global brand with ripple effects felt across its economy. After becoming a major force in English and European football in the 1970s and 1980s, LFC's globality has been cemented more recently through a combination of its national and global Cup wins and its American owners. LFC also plays a major role in the region's visitor economy, in pre-COVID times (2017-2018 Season) attracting more than 1.5 million football fans to Anfield and the impact of visitors from outside the local area reflected in their £102m contribution to the LCR visitor economy (LFC 2019). In the same year, the club's activities supported more than 4,500 jobs across the Liverpool economy, representing 2.3% of all jobs in Liverpool (LFC 2019).

The impact of the Beatles and LFC is not just on the region's visitor economy, but also its knowledge economy too. In 1988, the University of Liverpool created the Institute of Popular Music and became the first department in the UK to introduce dedicated, specialist popular music studies and research (University of Liverpool (b) 2021). A legacy of firsts which is continuing in 2021 with the department becoming the world's first and only to offer a Masters on the Beatles (University of Liverpool (c) 2021). Whilst Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, which opened in 1996 and was co-founded by Sir Paul McCartney, is now recognised as one of the best performing arts schools in the world.

It's perhaps unsurprising that the home to one of the world's most widely supported football clubs, is also home to the Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) School of Sport and Exercise Science. A department which has been ranked as top in the UK for research¹⁰ and the 12th best department in the world for the subject in the 2020 Academic Ranking of World Universities (Liverpool John Moores University 2021).

Another Liverpool first, the School of Sport and Exercise Science was the first institution in the world to host a single honours degree programme in sport science back in 1975 (Liverpool John Moores University 2021). Liverpool's global music and sporting reputation has evidently impacted the city's ability to attract the brightest talent and academics in these particular fields.



A Beatles tribute band at the Cavern Club 60 years on

⁹ We must be careful not to over sentimentalise or exaggerate this point. We will also discuss in Section 6.2 the inequalities surround this apparent shared sense of identity.

¹⁰ In the 2014 Research Excellence Framework. A new 2021 REF is being undertaken.

5.0

The differentiators of today



5.0 The differentiators of today

Having acknowledged that the past has, in many respects, paved way to some of the main things that differentiate Liverpool today, we must now consider in more detail what those current differentiators are.

5.1 Innovation

The LCR has a significant dispersal of place-based innovation assets which are each playing their part in creating a compelling offer for the region and are of strategic importance looking forward. These include the Knowledge Quarter Liverpool Innovation District (KQ Liverpool), STFC Hartree Centre, SciTech Daresbury, the Baltic Triangle, Alder Hey Innovation Centre, Glass Futures in St Helens, Unilever R&D and the Materials Innovation Factory, Wirral Waters and the Port.

In KQ Liverpool alone you can find the aforementioned Materials Innovation Factory, Liverpool Science Park, Sensor City, the Accelerator and the 30-acre Paddington Village campus, including The Spine. Liverpool Science Park is now home to both the Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC) and the Centre for Process Innovation (CPI). The “go-to places” for advanced manufacturing technologies in the UK.

The wider city region has advanced manufacturing facilities, such as Jaguar Land Rover at Halewood, along with the pharmaceutical cluster at Speke, including flu vaccine manufacturer Seqirus, which also form part of the overall Liverpool innovation offer.

Whilst other cities have similar R&D bases and innovation hotspots, we must not underestimate the importance of continuing to differentiate Liverpool according to these assets. Although geographically separated and of course with different specialisations (and therefore messaging), continuing to promote these assets as a core part of the overall Liverpool offer will help the region to be increasingly viewed as a place of knowledge with the right ecosystem enablers for innovation to thrive.

The mass testing pilot is an example of how Liverpool's innovation assets and now wired-in collaborative nature are differentiating the city.

With the alarming spike in Covid-19 cases as we were heading into the winter of 2020, urgent problems demanded quick solutions. On Friday 6 November 2020, Liverpool embarked on not just a national pilot, but a global one, of open-access testing for coronavirus among people without symptoms (University of Liverpool (d) 2021). Dependent on its place-based strengths in infectious disease and public health research (with the University of Liverpool in KQ Liverpool leading on the evaluation of the pilot) and facilitated by trusted collaboration between public organisations (including Liverpool City Council's Public Health Team headed up by Professor Matthew Ashton), the mass testing pilot allowed Liverpool to differentiate itself both nationally and globally. The pilot prevented the spread of the virus and saved lives. It also demonstrated the city's capabilities in infection on a global stage which in turn facilitated significant investment into the city from overseas. This culminating in the newly formed Pandemic Institute which is again dependent on Liverpool's innovation assets and collaboration between them.¹¹ An excellent example of how city differentiation based on the region's genuine strengths can facilitate significant investment, and create the high quality jobs needed to attract and retain talent, as the Institute is primed to do.

¹¹ Officially launched on the 13th September 2021, the Pandemic Institute aims to deliver the world's first comprehensive end-to-end institution for pandemic prediction, preparation, prevention, response and recovery. Its founding partners include University of Liverpool, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool City Council, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and KQ Liverpool.

Image of LSP: Gunner Gu

5.0 The differentiators of today

5.2 People

Something which also differentiates Liverpool is its people – particularly in terms of the expertise within the city and the willingness of the local population to come together for its benefit. This is in part the result of the aforementioned Scouse identity and a loyalty to the city from those who have connections to it. Let's again use the example of the mass testing pilot. In terms of people, the pilot's recognised success was dependent on two main things – Liverpool having the expertise to deliver it and public participation.

5.2.1 Expertise and diasporic communities

Professor Iain Buchan, Executive Dean of the University of Liverpool's Institute of Population Health, played a key part in the delivery of Liverpool's mass testing pilot. Buchan, having grown up in Liverpool, had left the city to progress his early career in Cambridge and then Manchester. Places which, at the time, had more resources and opportunity in his field of medicine and computer science. But Iain came back to the city in recent years, motivated by a desire to "create more opportunities for children growing up in Liverpool and to reduce the huge inequalities which exist in the region." Without this sense of belonging and perceived duty to the city, Liverpool arguably wouldn't have had the expertise to deliver and differentiate itself on a global stage.



Something which also differentiates Liverpool is its people.

There are several key leaders and changemakers who had previously left Liverpool in pursuit of career development, and came back in some way to make a positive difference. From Mike Moran MBE, CEO of Rutherford Health who felt proud to bring Rutherford Diagnostics HQ and the Rutherford Cancer Centre North West to his home city of Liverpool, marking a step forward for patients to gain access to earlier diagnosis and the best cancer treatment as quickly as possible. To John Cummins who, although still living and working outside Liverpool, remains deeply committed and dedicates his time to drive forward game changing projects for the city including being a key figure in the Bruntwood SciTech investment of KQ Liverpool spin out Sciontec, whilst in his previous role as MD for Future Cities at Legal and General, and more recently as a proactive supporter in the establishment of the Pandemic Institute. And Claire Liddy, Managing Director at Alder Hey Innovation Centre, who left Liverpool to pursue her early career in London but came back and, like other city leaders, shares a passion to "make the city the best it can be."

It appears that a shared identity amongst those who have historic ties to Liverpool seems to pull people back here – almost a returning diaspora – driven by ambitions to generate social impact and make the place greater. This is equipping the city with unique expertise and generating positive change for Liverpool and beyond.

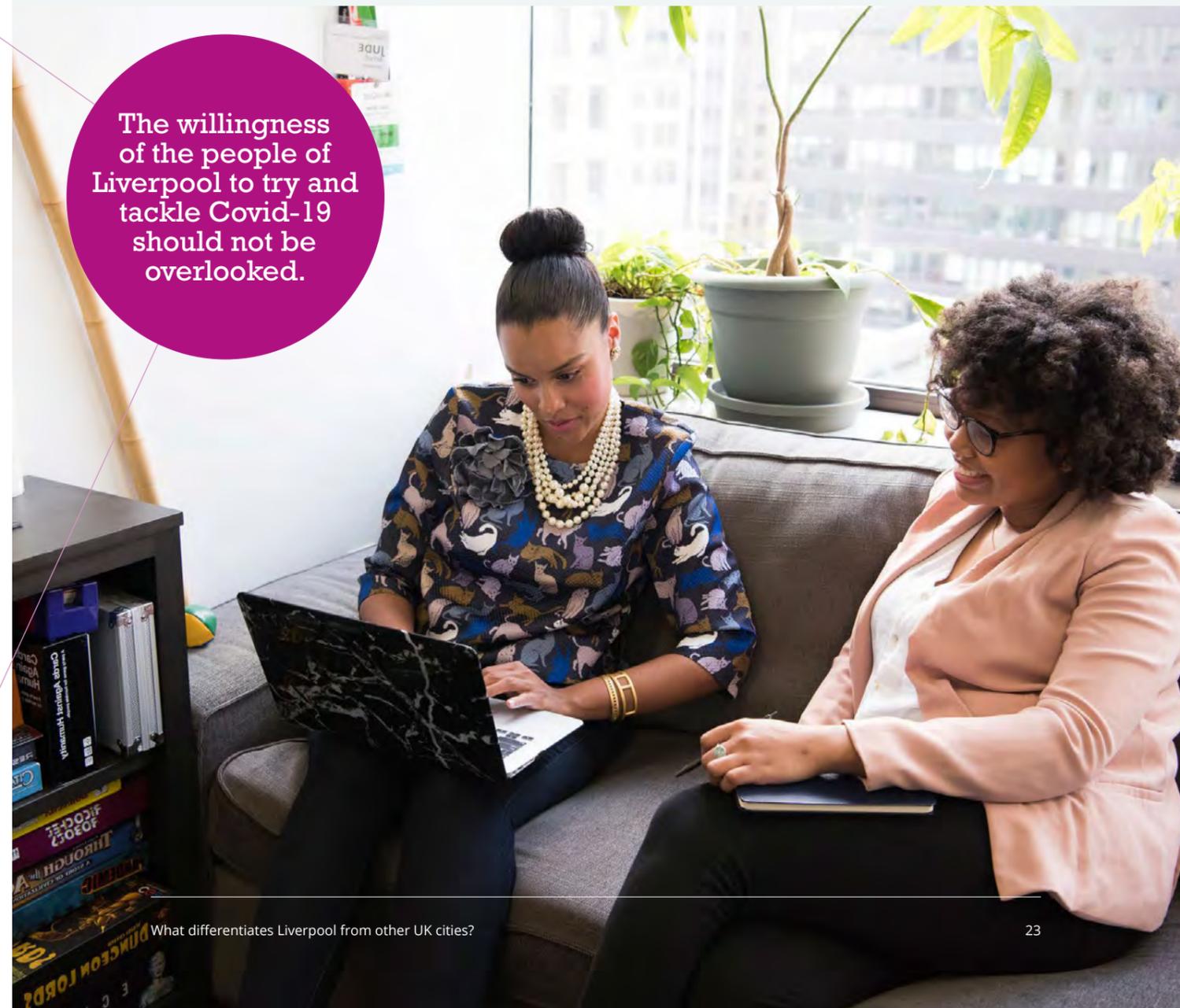
5.2.2 Community engagement

Going back to the mass testing pilot example, it also depended on public participation. The willingness of the people of Liverpool to try and tackle Covid-19 should not be overlooked. Over one third ¹² of the Liverpool population took part in the pilot (University of Liverpool 2020,1). The findings of the interim report on the pilot demonstrated that a "shared sense of identity with other Liverpool residents and an ethical imperative to take part was apparent" (University of Liverpool 2020, 23). With 80% of those taking part in the pilot doing so "to help Liverpool beat the virus" and social media analysis echoing this with "people expressing pride in the city and seeing the pilot as an opportunity for Liverpool to set an example for the rest of the country" (University of Liverpool 2020, 23 - 24).

In this way, participation in the mass testing pilot was to some extent dependent on a loyalty and pride in the city which is a core part of the Scouse identity. A strong passion for and connectedness to the city is therefore differentiating Liverpool in terms of having the expertise to deliver change and the willingness of the Liverpool population to unite for the benefit of the city.

¹² This later increased to 57% between 6 November 2020 and 30 April 2021.

The willingness of the people of Liverpool to try and tackle Covid-19 should not be overlooked.



5.3 Cultural and geographic diversity

One of Liverpool's key differentiators is the diversity of its cultural offer. From the Beatles to Brookside, the cultural export of the city continues to grow. Liverpool now has a thriving film and TV industry, underpinned by its cultural heritage, which is less perhaps well known than the Beatles, Mo Salah and Jurgen Klopp. With Liverpool's Georgian Quarter often filmed as Georgian London and the waterfront as Manhattan, and Phil Redmond's pioneering soap operas Brookside and Hollyoaks. The City Council's Film Office plays a pivotal role in making Liverpool the UK's second most filmed city and the pop up Depot film studios paving the way for the future redevelopment of the Littlewoods building on Edge Lane (Liverpool Film Office 2021).

Hope Street in KQ Liverpool is home to the UK's oldest continuing professional symphony orchestra, two Cathedrals and a nationally significant theatre. A bit further afield, Aintree Racecourse holds the annual world famous Grand National and the Royal Liverpool Golf Course in Hoylake is one of just 14 courses to hold the globally prestigious Open, which it is set to do again in 2023. The Liverpool World Museum has been the most popular visitor attraction outside London and the city is home to more museums and galleries than anywhere else in the UK outside London (Prolific North 2019). These are just a few of the cultural and sporting assets that contribute to Liverpool's cultural legacy, with major events such as the Giants attracting millions of visitors to the city and a whole host of theatres, night-life venues and other attractions to enjoy.

Not only diverse in its cultural activity offer, but also in terms of the quality of life Liverpool can offer.



Diversity of living – New Brighton beach



The Liverpool Philharmonic Hall is located on Hope Street

Image of Philharmonic: Ben Blackall

Not only diverse in its cultural activity offer, but also in terms of the quality of life Liverpool can offer. The perceptions of Liverpool from people who live outside the city, can greatly differ from its reality. Outside of Liverpool, a negative perception of the city being synonymous with crime and gang culture to some extent remains. Not necessarily amongst a GenZ audience, but certainly for those who were familiar with the city in the 1980s. Yet, it is not uncommon that when people visit the city, they are pleasantly surprised with their experience. This perception only really changes when people visit the city or live here. That is part of the challenge.

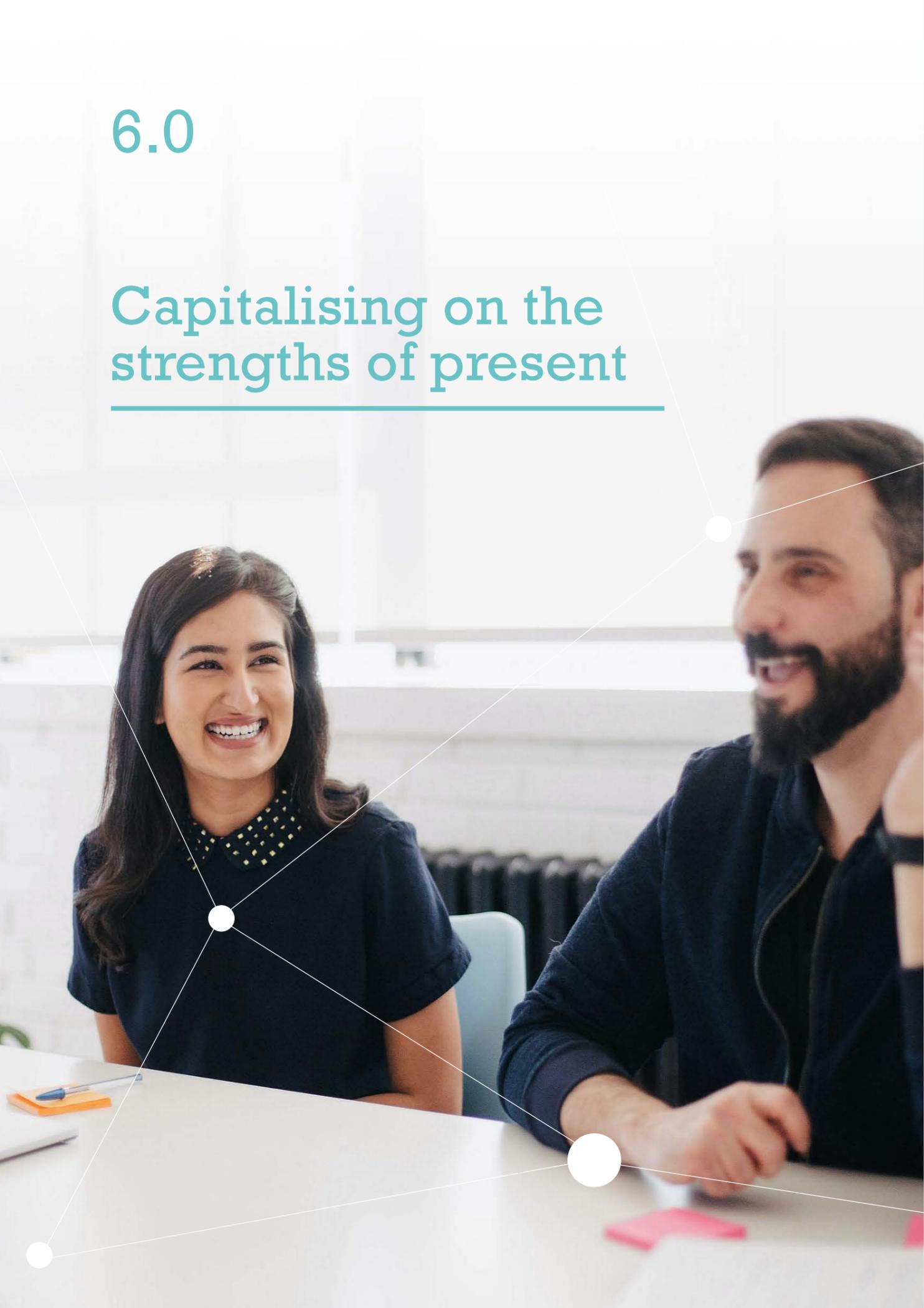
The types of living available in Liverpool and the wider region, is something which sets it apart from other UK cities. A well-connected city and region, one could be enjoying the beach in New Brighton or Formby and in 20 minutes be in the hustle and bustle of the city centre or even the countryside. Not only diverse in the types of living available – whether beach, city, town or countryside – it is

also cost effective, as one of the most affordable cities in the UK to live (The Independent 2021). This means Liverpool's wider cultural offering, from restaurants to recreation, is more accessible.

The geographical makeup of the region can also be a pull for businesses to locate here. Both in terms of its global connectivity with the port, Liverpool John Lennon Airport and Manchester Airport within a 45-minute drive, and also in terms of the viability and scope for the use of its land. For instance, the region's landscape can accommodate for the building of a manufacturing facility or warehouse space, both of which have boomed in demand during the pandemic with the need for pharmaceutical production and the move to online retail. Equally, unlike many other competing cities, Liverpool is not overly saturated and has available land for further commercial development.

6.0

Capitalising on the strengths of present



6.0 Capitalising on the strengths of present

Having identified three broad things that in our opinion differentiate Liverpool today – its innovation, people and culture – it is important to consider what we can do to capitalise on these differences.

6.1 Making our strengths in Health and Life Sciences and innovation known, and championing outward looking collaboration

As discussed previously, the LCR has a significant dispersal of innovation assets, each responsible for driving forward the region's genuinely world-class strengths which include Infectious Diseases, Materials Chemistry and High Performance and Cognitive Computing. Despite this message landing within certain Liverpool circles and to some extent beyond, the region is still not well known locally, nationally or globally for its health and life sciences offer or strengths in computing for instance. Few beyond and even within the city would think "Liverpool – the Beatles, LFC and Infection." Whilst work is ongoing to position Liverpool according to its health and life sciences and innovation strengths, there is evidently more to be done to spread this message.

On an accessible level, the Growth Platform have produced detailed Core Value Propositions (CVPs) which could be useful to stakeholders who want to understand more about what makes Liverpool strong in each area. This could be helpful if ever questioned about Liverpool's strengths beyond the headline term of "infection." What does that actually mean and what are the assets we have that make us strong? Once we get the narrative more consistent internally, we can really project ourselves nationally and globally. There is also a need to be more visible in promoting this offer.

Whether attending and hosting conferences, or more boldly having dedicated individuals who spread the Liverpool message to targeted investors, government departments or other organisations of strategic importance, we need to increase our visibility in this space. As part of the KQ Liverpool 2025 Vision, we plan to support this effort.

City stakeholders also need to help local people and visitors to understand the strength of the region in innovation and better explain how they can benefit from the opportunities being created for them, so that they feel part of the growing ecosystem. Matt Reed, Strategic Director of the Materials Innovation Factory, gave an excellent example of why this is important. Quite often when people first visit the city, they get into a taxi to travel to their hotel or destination. In most cases, that is the first engagement that an individual has with Liverpool. During their ride, they may ask about the city. But, as it stands, the taxi driver is unlikely to talk about the world-leading scientists that are just down the road or the ground-breaking research and innovation that is making a difference globally. Our focus should be on sharing this message with local people and visitors too, not just potential investors and the government.

As well as getting the messaging right, we need to join up with our neighbours - whether Manchester, Cheshire or Warrington - particularly where there is synergy and where there are big ticket opportunities. City competitiveness will always exist, but we need to recognise where collaboration will be of mutual benefit. Attracting investment into the North West is better than losing it to other regions. iiCON is a good example of recognising synergy and joining forces to maximise impact. We must continue to collaborate where our strengths align with our neighbours and where opportunities exist. As a single joined up health and life sciences proposition Liverpool, Manchester and Cheshire has the scale to be relevant on an international stage. Whilst the government increasingly looks at place-based innovation, we should consider placemaking at not only the scale of say Paddington Village, or KQ Liverpool, but also across much wider regional geographies where collaboration can create something greater than the sum of the parts.

6.2 Inclusive Innovation

The pandemic saw a shift in the pre-existing culture of city unitedness, from togetherness for social justice to togetherness for public health improvement. The mass testing pilot saw the general public, public sector and educational institutions of Liverpool come together to charter uncertain waters and trailblaze the route to a national testing policy. Community engagement and participation being vital to this. The energy put into the pandemic across organisations and the engagement of these organisations with the general public must be sustained and encouraged post-pandemic.

But we must acknowledge that not everyone was or has been given the opportunity to share the sense of identity which seemingly motivated public participation. Despite its regeneration and the recent growth of its innovation and knowledge economy, not all of Liverpool has benefited. Growth has arguably had little or no impact on the surrounding communities. Resultantly, Liverpool still has a larger proportion of neighbourhoods in the highest deprivation percentile than other English Core Cities (Liverpool City Council 2020, 10).

Participation in the mass testing pilot was limited by socio-economic inequalities. Test uptake was lower and infection rates were higher in deprived areas (University of Liverpool (e) 2021, 7). Access to digital resources, lower digital literacy, and fear of income loss from self-isolation all barriers to participation, as well as a lower take up among non-White ethnic groups (University of Liverpool (e) 2021, 7). In trying to harness and propel the growth which those innovation assets are capable of, we need to continue to think about how we bring in those communities to share the growth and remove the barriers to participation. We need to champion initiatives that empower and give all Liverpool residents the opportunity to participate in "city wide" efforts.

The 2025 KQ Liverpool Vision has a whole strand dedicated to this in "Being a Better Neighbour" which aims to support and deliver initiatives that bring the surrounding communities into the future growth of KQ Liverpool. For instance, by creating an outreach programme that will deliver educational workshops to young people in and around KQ Liverpool, we can help to ensure that communities feel part of the ecosystem and are provided with tangible aspirations within the knowledge economy. We also want to support those existing initiatives and collaborate on new ones, which seek to remove barriers to participation and to ensure the benefits of future growth are not just restricted to certain boundaries.

There are excellent examples of where this is already happening, with Everton in the Community (EitC) supporting local communities since 1988 through sport, health and education programmes. EitC also offer support programmes including the Pass on the Memories programme in partnership with Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust which supports people living with dementia and their carers.

6.3 Using culture to sell place, take risks and inspire

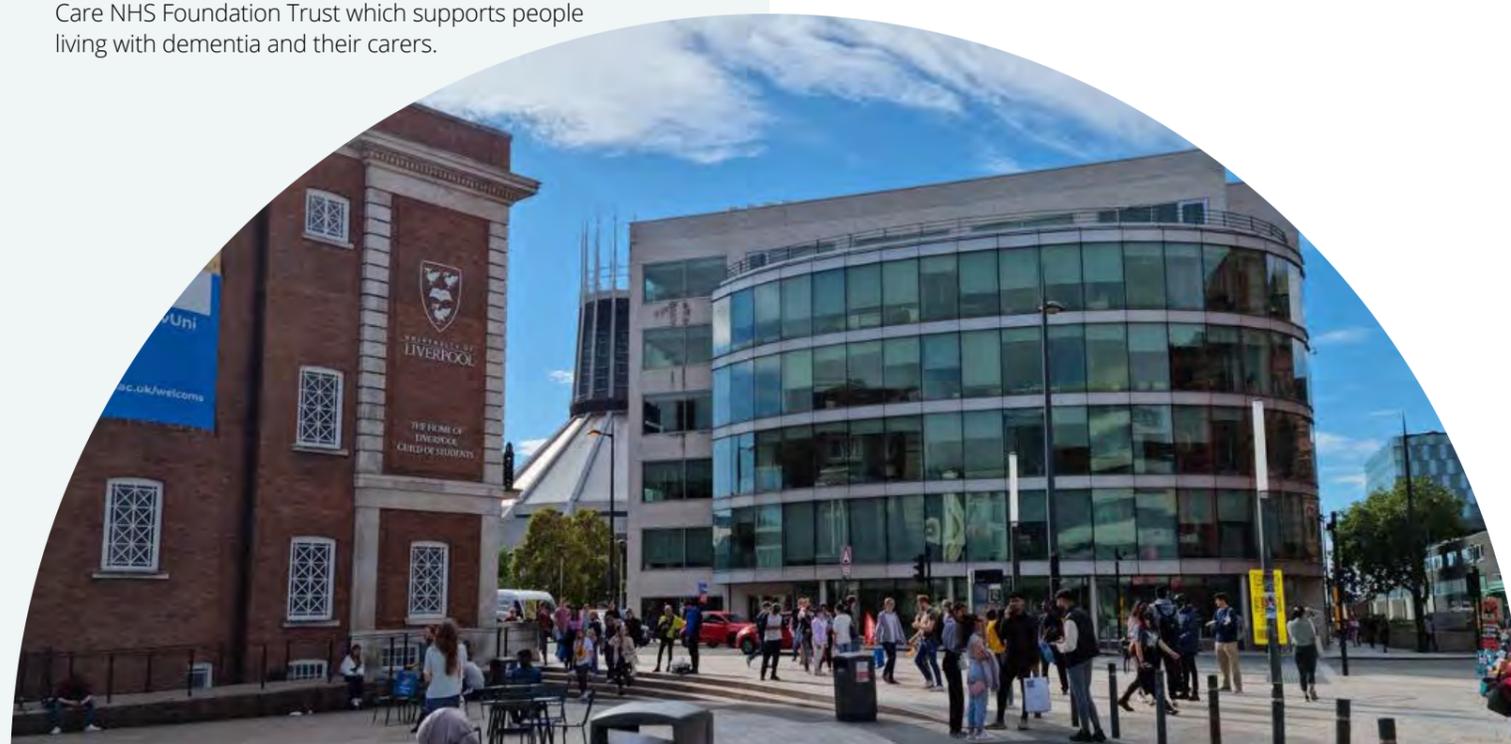
Then onto culture. What can we do to capitalise on Liverpool's culture including its quality of life offer? In a post-Covid world, with the yet unknown impacts of remote working and the rise of UK "staycations," there is a prime opportunity to further capitalise on selling the place. Selling Liverpool to those staycationers or homeworkers looking for new places to visit or even live. There are already campaigns in the works around encouraging tourists to visit Liverpool City Region, funded by the Combined Authority and to be delivered by the Growth Platform (The Guide Liverpool 2021). Marketing Liverpool is also focusing on promoting real examples of people living, working and investing in the city as a way to build the narrative around Liverpool's thriving visitor economy and growing knowledge economy. Despite the evident strain on the public purse and resources, city stakeholders should continue to look to support and promote these campaigns where possible.

Often referred to as the "best place to visit" or "the best city to go out in," Liverpool's visitor economy was booming pre-pandemic and the pull of this Northern city was attracting ever increasing student applications (Groupia 2021). Whilst hard to quantify why the culture of the people of Liverpool stands it apart from other UK cities, it certainly seems to have a greater emotional resilience than most, a will to do it first, to experiment and a desire to take risks.



A city rich in historic architecture
- Abercromby Square

The city's participation in the events research programme, with Culture Liverpool playing a core role, is an example of Liverpool using its cultural position, and the appetite of its local population to participate in unique events, to not only support the economic sector in trialling the opening up of the night time economy, but also to support public health research and policy. Looking ahead, there are ongoing talks for net zero carbon gigs to be hosted in the city. As with the event's pilots, this would be another Liverpool world-first. We should continue to seek opportunities which utilise Liverpool's cultural strengths in order to generate environmental, health and social impacts. For the latter mentioned, there is more to be made of Liverpool's cultural offer in inspiring the next generation of creatives in local communities. The KQ Liverpool outreach programme will support this effort in also highlighting the creative opportunities available in the city and region to young people to inspire and spark ambition.



Students return to the University of Liverpool in KQ Liverpool
Image of Abercromby Square: Ben Blackall

7.0

The differentiators of the future



7.0 The differentiators of the future

Knowing that the past dictates what differentiates Liverpool today, looking optimistically ahead, we can consider what might be the differentiators of the future. As articulated by Tony Reeves, CEO of Liverpool City Council:

“Liverpool’s track record of thinking creatively and delivering solutions that others seek to imitate is unsurpassed. Liverpool’s history has been forged by a necessity to overcome, be it harnessing the Mersey, developing the skyscraper, or treating infectious diseases. And it is this unique spirit of determination and its inventiveness which has not just improved the nation, but generated positive dividends around the world. The new Pandemic Institute is the latest manifestation of Liverpool’s fabled will to succeed and lead. Nationally and globally.”

7.1 Science and technology

Although already a core part of Liverpool's distinctiveness today, building on the region's strengths in science, technology and innovation will continue to differentiate Liverpool into the future. In the health and life sciences space, the Pandemic Institute has scope to be a differentiator.

7.1.1 The Pandemic Institute

They say history has a tendency to repeat itself and it is true that the Institute's formation is reminiscent of LSTM's. Both established to tackle pressing infectious diseases issues. With LSTM celebrating its 125th Anniversary next year, how remarkable would it be that the Pandemic Institute similarly celebrates the same landmark in the year 2146. Having achieved its core mission of ensuring the world is better prepared to respond to pandemics and prevented the social, economic and psychological turmoil that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought.

Image of Lab Workers: Ben Blackall



The new Pandemic Institute is the latest manifestation of Liverpool's fabled will to succeed and lead.

A glance at how the Pandemic Institute, from its headquarters at The Spine in KQ Liverpool, can differentiate Liverpool includes supporting the establishment of a Human Challenge Facility which undertakes vital vaccine trials and research to deliver solutions that protect the population from emerging infectious diseases. Or the creation of a High Level Containment Facility which brings together the region's strengths in infection, zoonosis and robotics, with lab automation, facilitating research on pathogens of pandemic potential. Where the Pandemic Institute can bring together the region's strengths in infection and disease, and also its wider innovation specialisms, it has the potential to make a real difference.

The creation of the Pandemic Institute will also help to shine a global spotlight on Liverpool's existing strengths in delivering Phase One to Four clinical trials and form part of Liverpool's ambitious ii-Zone¹³ which aims to consolidate the unique infection innovation ecosystem emerging across the LCR and North West



Creating and developing spaces for the collision of minds is critical to fulfilling the potential of such ambitious projects.

7.1.2 Emerging strengths including Sport Science, Applied Health and Health Informatics

But the application and commercialisation of science and technology can't happen in isolation and, without the spaces for collaboration and innovation the city can't grow. Creating and developing spaces for the collision of minds is critical to fulfilling the potential of such ambitious projects. Liverpool Science Park and the Materials Innovation Factory being great existing examples of this.

The important point to make here is that science park buildings are more than just bricks and mortar. It's the innovation within them that counts and that innovation needs the right kind of creative and collaborative environment to thrive. So whether it's the advancement and commercialisation of infectious diseases research, antibiotic resistance, antimicrobial surfaces, materials chemistry or the emerging specialisms of sports science, nursing and nutrition, clinical trials, health informatics, civic data and diagnostics, they all need the right places and spaces to succeed.

Liverpool John Moores University's plans for a new Sports Campus, building on its ranking as one of the best Sport and Exercise Science departments in the country, and its growing School of Nursing and Applied Health, with its "Health Village", being as important to the growth of Liverpool as any new science or technology building. The new LJMU Student Life Building and Sports Hall at Copperas Hill, the John Lennon Art and Design Building, and University of Liverpool's new Digital Innovation Facility and Yoko Ono Lennon Centre demonstrate that the design and use of education and performance space, workspace and labs is fundamental to innovation, as are the people and projects within them.

¹³ ii-Zone is the proposed Infection Innovation Zone, which will commercialise infection innovation by building on the foundations set by iiCON and orchestrating the region's infection, digital and civic innovation assets.

7.1.3 Sciontec Developments Limited

In this sense, Sciontec also has the potential to facilitate the differentiators of the future. Until recently, Liverpool had been unable to attract the big pension funds that Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham attracted. The Sciontec deal, completed in the midst of the pandemic, broke that mould by bringing Bruntwood and importantly their joint venture partner Legal & General (L&G) to the city. A public private sector partnership – made up of University of Liverpool, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool City Council and Bruntwood SciTech – Sciontec’s ambition is to develop science and technology workspace, and labs, across the LCR, to create an innovative ecosystem that is connected at all levels, to promote the commercialisation of research and encourage more university spin outs and start-ups.

Liverpool’s relative underinvestment in commercial real estate, when compared to other UK cities, and poor track record in attracting occupiers in recent decades has led to its depleting supply of quality workspace. The £1bn Paddington Village Development in KQ Liverpool is changing this, with the new £35m Spine building – designed to be one of the world’s healthiest

buildings – creating the quality stock needed to attract occupiers to the region. Sciontec’s pipeline of developments will build on the KQ Liverpool vision and further boost this offer, with proposed developments such as the 120,000 sq ft HEMISPHERE building providing the space needed to house future innovators and responding to forecasted occupier demands.

In having the right space to spark creativity and to attract occupiers, based on the region’s Health and Life Science and innovation strengths, the impacts of agglomeration can be maximised. Through sustained investment and successfully attracting occupiers, the jobs needed to retain and attract talent will be created. Whilst Sciontec focuses on development and property, its founder KQ Liverpool focuses on strategy and placemaking. Through the delivery of its Vision, KQ Liverpool can help to ensure that people in surrounding communities are given the opportunity to be part of the ecosystem which Sciontec seeks to create. For it is important to ensure that the things which are standing Liverpool apart when compared to other cities, are also not creating difference (and divide) locally.



The Free Trade Zone is expected to contribute around £850m GVA and create 14,000 jobs.

A core part of the region’s past and the future - The Albert Dock

7.2 The Maritime sector and Freeport status

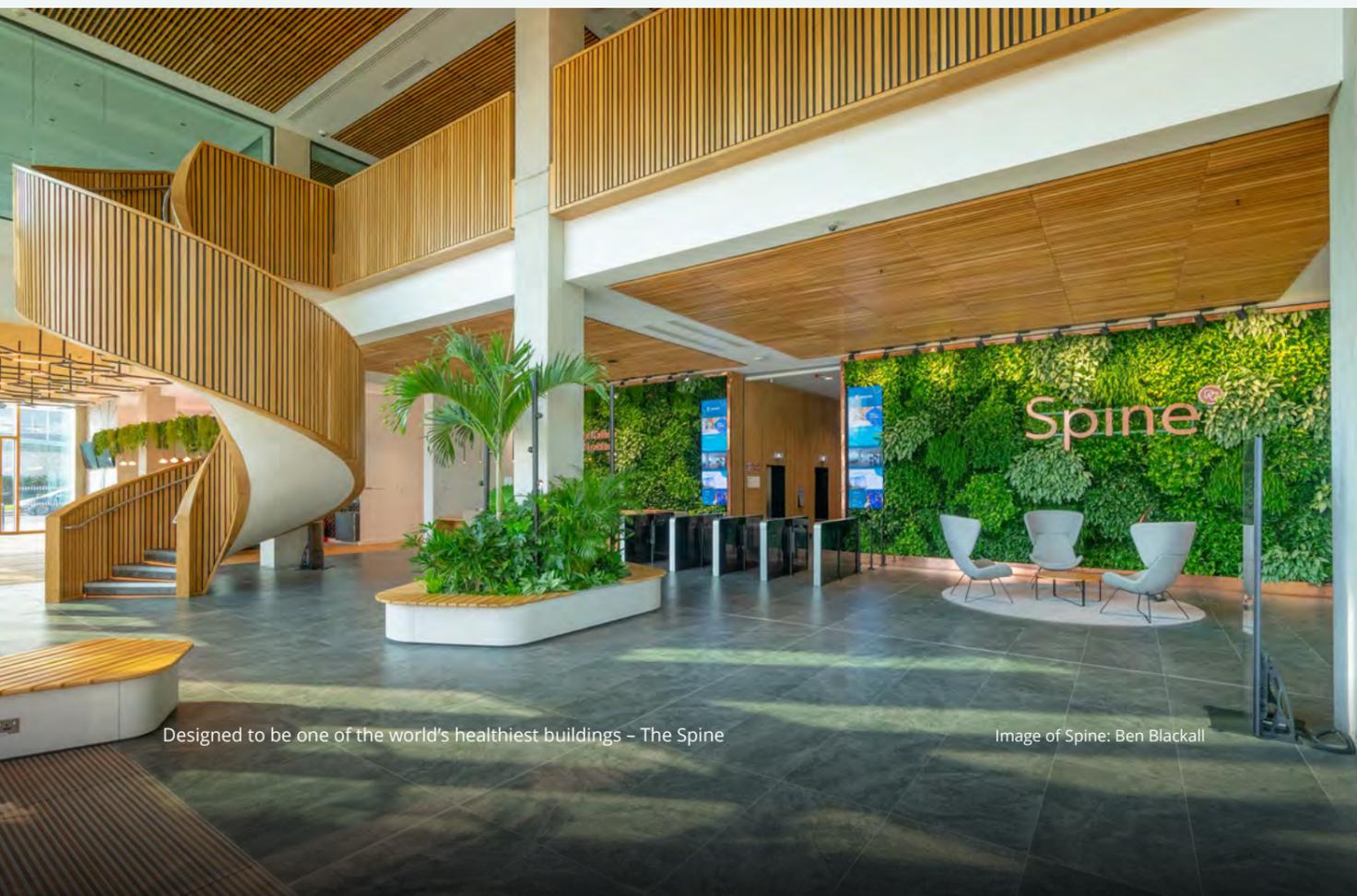
Home to the first commercial wet dock, Liverpool was referred to as the “second city of the Empire” until its post-war decline eventually led to the closure of Albert Dock in 1972 (BBC 2015). The River Mersey is however now once again a point of differentiation when compared to other UK cities with Liverpool home to the largest transatlantic dock facility, Liverpool2 (BBC 2020).

With the recent announcement of the region being awarded Freeport status and the trading landscape set to change post-Brexit, the maritime sector is primed to be a major differentiator of the city region in the future. Not least because the Free Trade Zone is expected to contribute around £850m GVA and create 14,000 jobs (Liverpool Local Enterprise Partnership (b) 2021). But also in terms of leading on solutions to meet the Region’s Net Zero Carbon targets for 2040, with the Maritime Knowledge Hub at Wirral Waters designed to be an innovative beacon of professional maritime thinking and action, supported by the unique place-based innovation assets across the region and inherent collaborative culture (Wirral Waters 2021). This building on a regional maritime economy that already has a £4.2bn turnover and supports 52,000 jobs (Wirral Waters 2021).



Transformed by Sciontec - Liverpool Science Park

Image of LSP: Ben Blackall



Designed to be one of the world’s healthiest buildings – The Spine

Image of Spine: Ben Blackall

7.3 By creating synergistic linkages

As articulated by Simon Reid, Head of Sectors at Growth Platform, “the Freeport isn’t just about freight and logistics, it’s also where innovation and advanced manufacturing meet the maritime sector.” Whilst geographically separated at two ends of the city centre, collaboration between key KQ Liverpool assets and the Port is driving forward transformative solutions for the maritime sector. With Liverpool John Moores University a key partner in the proposed Maritime Knowledge Hub and University of Liverpool home to part of the National Oceanographic Centre.

To that end, Liverpool’s recent successes have been to a large degree the result of increased collaboration across key city stakeholders and organisations. Partnership working has been at the heart of the response to the pandemic, increasing the recognition that you get more done when working in teams and that innovation happens naturally when entrepreneurs and academics, scientists and clinicians, public servants and changemakers come together.

By continuing and seeking to create synergistic partnerships across the region’s innovation assets, Liverpool will be able to continue to differentiate itself. A great example being the immediate scientific output of the Pandemic Institute. Where, for instance, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and Liverpool John Moores University are in synergistic discussions at a level possibly never seen before. Another is the LCR Connect project. A 212km digital loop connecting the entire city region in a single super highway. With the potential to power not only Liverpool’s creative, digital and media industries but also the city’s growing strengths in health and life sciences.

Sustaining this collaborative culture will ensure innovation transcends geographical boundaries and the differentiators of the future are nurtured. Whilst we don’t know specifically what these will be, collaboration across the region’s innovation assets will generate something which stands our city apart.



Image of City: Christian Smith

8.0

Conclusion

“If you were to ask me how to sum up Liverpool in less than 50 words I’d say this:

A beautiful waterfront city, which is once again a thriving port, Liverpool is powered by its knowledge economy and fuelled by its culture. It is a world leader in the fight against infectious diseases and at the forefront of innovation in materials chemistry and manufacturing technology.”

Colin Sinclair,
CEO of KQ Liverpool and Sciontec

8.0 Conclusion

Overall, in this paper, we have identified three broad themes that we believe differentiate Liverpool from other UK cities which city and regional stakeholders can capitalise on in order to support the post-pandemic recovery and to attract and retain investment and talent. These include: our physical innovation assets and their associated networks, people and culture.

Innovation - Despite the city’s relative underinvestment in commercial property over the past decade, there are a number of significant new and reinvigorated innovation assets driving forward Liverpool’s growth and strengths in infectious diseases, materials chemistry, advanced manufacturing and digital technologies. With sports science and the wider health economy from nursing to nutrition and health informatics to diagnostics emerging as potential USP’s. A priority must be to share this message with all people, from investors and government, to local communities.

People - Liverpool is a passionate city with huge pride in place, which is generating positive change for the city both in terms of its expertise and leadership, and the willingness of the general public to come together for the benefit of the city. We need to create the opportunities for all communities to share this sense of togetherness.

Culture - Despite its internationally renowned cultural offer, Liverpool’s quality of life offer is less well known. There is more to be made of this, and Liverpool can also leverage its global cultural status to take risks, and push the boundaries, and to inspire the next generation of creatives.

In many ways Liverpool has already capitalised on its unique identity as a waterfront city with a strong cultural offer, to distinguish itself globally.

We now also need to better promote our knowledge economy with all of its incredible scientific achievements, establishing it as an integral part of the city and city region brand. Whilst also ensuring that the benefits are not only felt economically but also socially. Delivering inclusive innovation and growth for all.

9.0

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10.0

Appendix

This paper was written by Colin Sinclair, CEO of KQ Liverpool and Sciontec and Emily Cook, Policy Assistant at KQ Liverpool, and produced with support from the Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place at the University of Liverpool.

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10.2 Imagery

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The Spine

Royal College
of Physicians

Want to know more?
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