



NEWCASTLE
CITY FUTURES



An Overview

What is it?

[Newcastle City Futures](#) (NCF) was established in 2014 by Newcastle University as a collaborative platform to bring together research and development potential with long term policy trends and business needs in the city. It led a very successful public facing exhibition and series of events in the city centre in 2014 with 24 partners addressing Newcastle past, present and future in visual and engaging forms.

In 2015, the city council established the **City Futures Development Group** comprising local authorities, universities, the LEP and private sector to think long term about the city's prospects and research needs. The CFDG reports to the Science City Partnership Board and aims to identify growth opportunities, multi-partner and multi-sector projects, public and business engagement on city futures, and new research projects.

NCF was part funded in 2014-15 by the Government Office for Science Future of Cities Foresight Project, led by Sir Mark Walport and Sir Alan Wilson. Its long term report [Newcastle City Futures 2065](#) was published in July 2015 identifying evidence and priority themes, and setting out the case for Newcastle to be seen as a test-bed city for innovation.

In 2016 NCF became a £1.2m Research Councils UK/ Innovate UK **Urban Living Partnership** (ULP) pilot project (one of five nationally) that aims to address the future needs of Newcastle and Gateshead through the collaborative design of projects that can be delivered across the city.

Led by Newcastle University in partnership with Northumbria University the NCF ULP now comprises 22 partners covering public, private and third sectors in the city. Core partners and supporters include government (Newcastle City Council, Gateshead Council, North East LEP), industry (IBM, Arjuna, Intu, Newcastle Airport, Nexus, AECOM, Arup, BuroHapold, Zero Carbon Futures, Northumbrian Water, Northern Gas Networks, Northern Power Grid, Federation of Small Businesses, TechCity), and public and voluntary sectors (NHS, Newcastle Schools Forum, Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service, Quality of Life Partnership, and the Royal Society of Arts).

The consortium is bound together by the need to develop a shared long term vision for Newcastle and Gateshead which involves its establishment as an age friendly, sustainable urban area working in partnership to find solutions to the opportunities and problems of today and tomorrow.

NCF Vision

The NCF ULP reports to the City Futures Development Group. CFDG has adopted a **vision for the future of the city**:

Our vision is to ensure the economic growth of the Newcastle, Gateshead and the rest of the North East where all people in the city equally enjoy positive wellbeing and good health irrespective of age. Newcastle is a post-industrial city at the heart of region of 2m people. It has a long and illustrious history of scientific and technological innovation that we are using to address 21st century challenges: how to support the city's population harnessing digital platforms, broad civic engagement, and business development; leading to improvements in quality of life and new models of governance.

Both NCF and CFDG have priority themes of:

Age Friendly City: relationships between an ageing society, housing needs, and the use of digital technology;

Sustainable City: relationships between transport and highway design, digital technology and public health benefits;

Creative City: relationships between enhancing local democracy and engagement, visualisation of the urban realm, and cultural and creative arts to generate public interest.

Science City: relationships between science and engineering and collaborative democracy, particularly around themes such as energy consumption, and health.

These have been selected because **they match the priority policy areas** of the city council, the themes of Newcastle 2020 Group, and the NE LEP's smart specialisation focus areas. They also relate closely to the overarching societal challenge themes of both Newcastle University and Northumbria University.

NCF is committed to identifying and facilitating project development not only *within* each of these four areas but *between* the four themes as this is where there is the **greatest innovation potential** for the city.

Each theme is underpinned by a commitment to **enhance digital development, visualization and imagery for engagement and collaborative working**.

What are its aims?

1. To understand key interconnected and complex urban challenges facing the city that occur beyond individual disciplinary and policy sectoral perspectives;
2. To facilitate the bringing together of leading cross-disciplinary research expertise, city leaders, businesses, civic organisations and community groups, public, third sector and other urban innovators to engage, understand, debate and analyse;
3. To create collaborative methods and a forum for partners to work together, combining their strengths by creating a co-produced research and innovation ecosystem;
4. To co-produce practical responses and exploit emerging market opportunities and capacity for social innovation that have the potential to embed new practices in and across the urban region long term;
5. To frame identified challenges within the city and the region around the themes of ageing, sustainability and social renewal, addressing these through the lens of digital creativity and innovation, allowing us to utilize the region's global strengths whilst focusing on the prominent issues;
6. To align the strategic objectives of governmental and public service delivery organisations with higher education institutions to allow for more effective implementation of collaborative projects; and
7. To learn and reflect on the collaborative processes deployed as a series of communities of practice that are transparent and socially inclusive, allowing citizens and businesses to be part of the co-production methods.

What sort of issues does it deal with?

We have already identified a number of pressing themes:

Ageing. 15.6% of the population in the city is aged 65 or over, and this is expected to rise by a third by 2030. Trends such as this create challenges across the urban area in the fields of housing and transport design, and the need to find new ways to innovate, communicate and disseminate projects through digital means. The city also experiences higher numbers of people suffering from dementia when compared to the national average, and this is increasing with numbers aged over 65 is predicted to rise from 3,200 to 4,400 by 2030. Trends such as this require a change in how we deliver services to focus more on prevention and early intervention.

Sustainability. The NCF will build on the already existing platform of sustainability research and practice in the face of ever increasing environmental challenges. Climate change has been identified in the city as one of the six big challenges for local government over the next 20 years, with councils being committed to reducing the city's carbon emissions by 34% (from 1990 levels) by 2020. This commitment involves various schemes in order to try and achieve this position, including ensuring all new council homes are built to zero carbon standards from 2016, seeking to reduce domestic waste by 15% and using low carbon technology in vehicles.

Social Renewal. This covers a huge range of challenges across the city, and statistics for Newcastle and Gateshead emphasise the need for further work and solutions to address a range of critical issues. For example, unemployment has been rife in the North East of England for decades, and is well above the national average. The unemployment rate for the North East in October 2015 was 8.6%. There is also a widening gap in social inequalities in health. For example, there is a difference of 12 years life expectancy between men in the wealthier parts of Newcastle (Gosforth) compared to the more deprived areas (Byker).

How does it work?

As a consortium project's contribution to the life and development of Newcastle and Gateshead is facilitated both through project partners within the consortium and also *through the citizens themselves*. It builds on existing platforms (e.g. National Smart Data Institute, National Ageing and Science Institute, Digital Civics, Digital Economies Research Centre, UKCRIC, iBUILD, My Place). Business and citizen engagement is a fundamental aspect of the pilot phase both with regards to diagnostic work and in understanding how to work with businesses and citizens once challenges and opportunities are identified in order to maximise impact of delivery work.

Project partners not only help support citizen engagement but also provide a means by which to allow for real-life interventions in order to contribute to the life and development of the city. Larger corporate partners also assist small and medium enterprises in the city through collaborative project work. This includes the use of demonstrator projects which partners will take forward, formed around and co-designed to reflect the issues identified during the project in order to have more of a direct impact on the city and thereby create a 'test-bed city'.

Projects are identified by partner organisations working together and facilitated by the NCF. Projects must address multi-sectors, multi-partner involvement and use digital visualization and/or engagement methods. Supported projects are presented to the CFDG for comment and endorsement. A pipeline of projects has already emerged which will progress in parallel with each other but at different speeds.

Who benefits?

NCF can benefit a range of organisations and citizens in Newcastle and Gateshead:

Citizens and Communities - At the core of this pilot phase is the need to significantly contribute to the life, wellbeing and development of the citizens of Newcastle and Gateshead, by identifying key challenges currently faced by the area.

Local Government - Both local authorities can benefit in terms of their preparatory work for the revised Core Strategy beyond 2030, and the provision of intelligence into the quarterly public-facing Policy Cabinets and the Newcastle 2020 initiative. The North East LEP also benefits, especially in relation to the development of the Economic Strategy and Sustainable Urban Development Strategy.

Business - We work with these partners to help align their own project developments and investment strategies alongside the work of NCF, to achieve more effective outputs through enhanced citizen engagement, academic research evidence and cross-sectoral collaboration.

Public Services - As well as with industry partners, there is potential for significant impact from the work of NCF with regards to public sector organisations such as the NHS, Newcastle Schools Network, Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service and the Quality of Life Partnership.

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