

Case study: Northwest RDA

The vision for the Northwest
and how to get there



Successful regional policy can only be developed with an understanding of the present and the future. Policymakers need to be able to answer both 'where are we now?' and 'where could we be?'. Our Northwest Foresighting research ensured that the Northwest Regional Development Agency's regional strategy was informed by a wider awareness of the challenges and opportunities the Northwest is likely to face over the next two decades.



Challenge

The NWDA – the regional development agency responsible for leading the economic development and regeneration of England's Northwest – identified a need for guidance in planning and decision making when formulating their future strategies and priorities.

Solution

Our approach to this challenge combined Experian's expertise in regional economic analysis and experience in developing evidence for public policy, with the insight and techniques of the Future Foundation in interpreting likely economic and social futures.

We initially explored the future of the Northwest through trend analysis to identify themes shaping the future – including environmental pressures, technological advances, and the global economic balance.

Through a series of 'futureproofing' workshops we then considered exactly how these would affect the region, what was driving them, and which trends were most relevant to the specific economic, social and policy backdrop of the Northwest.

A series of workshops over a six month period – with the NWDA, their public sector partners, business and academia – developed the scenarios and informed an evidence base made up of nine research papers; topics included sustainable communities, the visitor economy and ICT.

This detailed and regionally specific insight informed a process of 'backcasting', defining both a vision for the Northwest, and the policy actions needed now to achieve it.

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Experian presented the findings and benefits of the approach at the NWDA's Research Conference at the University of Manchester.

Results

With a defined vision informed by global trends and their local impact, the NWDA is using the research to inform discussions and policies in the development of their new strategy. Beyond the evidence base and final findings, the NWDA are also using our techniques paper to guide the development of their own wider foresighting work.

Our detailed report described the process, offered visions of the Northwest region in 2027, and provided actionable policy recommendations on how to achieve this. The NWDA's research and policy teams now have an evidence base and context for the future of the region to guide their future strategy and priorities.

The approach used in this project has underpinned Experian's further foresighting and visioning studies such as our work for the East Kent Local Strategic Partnership on the future of East Kent, and for Government Skills on the future of employment and skills in the Civil Service.

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