



I've been Chief Executive of the Chamber of Commerce since 2000 and consider myself extremely lucky to have witnessed the transformation of Greater Manchester into a really outstanding city region. What strikes any visitor to Greater Manchester is the positive attitude and confidence of the city's businesses and residents, which has been the driving force behind much of what has happened over the past decade.

Manchester has always been a place that has attracted people for a whole host of reasons, from its influential youth and music culture to the city's iconic football teams. Regarded by many as the UK's second largest city region it is home to a truly multicultural mix of people and is a great place to live and work.

The city has a strong Victorian heritage and was one of the powerhouses of the industrial revolution. Manchester also has the largest university in the UK and a strong tradition of research and innovation, including the development of the first computer. This research and innovation continues with Manchester increasingly recognised as a leading centre for scientific excellence in areas such as aviation, healthcare and the biotech industry.

Although Greater Manchester is proud of its cultural and industrial heritage, it is by no means entrenched in its past; it is a rapidly developing and forward-looking city region. In Manchester, for example, The Spinningfields development has brought new life into the Deansgate area creating a financial and commercial centre at the heart of the city that includes the likes of HSBC, The Royal Bank of Scotland and The Manchester Evening News.

Growth continues and there are plenty of exciting developments in the pipeline, such as New Islington, the Kingsway development in Rochdale (see page 78) and Salford's MediaCityUK – a new district for much of the region's burgeoning media industry that will be anchored by five BBC departments. All of these new projects and developments indicate that the city region will continue to enjoy strong and steady growth.

Greater Manchester has always been a dominant centre for commerce and accommodates a large number of major financial and professional services operations, as well as creative and knowledge-based industries and public-sector facilities. The area is rapidly establishing its reputation as an international conference destination with an impressive choice of hotels and conference facilities. Manchester has already played host to large-scale international conferences and has established its place on the political party conference circuit.

Infrastructure and efficient transport links are imperative for Greater Manchester's continuing development. Manchester Airport is the largest airport in the UK outside of London and continues to play an important role in our regional economy and the city region's aspirations to be seen as a rival to the likes of Milan and Barcelona. The Metrolink system is one of the most successful transport improvements of the past decade and the planned extension will play a fundamental part in future development. However, there are still some major transport issues to be tackled to ensure that Greater Manchester has the unrivalled transport system it wants and deserves.

While the renaissance of modern Manchester is a great success story there is still plenty to do and some challenges ahead. However I'm confident that we will continue to meet these challenges in the city's customary, dynamic way.

Greater Manchester is at the heart of one of the most robust economic regions in the UK and is a great place to do business. It is an area of progress and ambition and I would like to encourage everyone to experience all that Greater Manchester has to offer. You won't be disappointed.



Angie Robison, Chief Executive  
Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce

For more information about the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, see page 34.