# South London Partnership unveils £38bn growth vision with push for devolution and innovation hubs



The South London Partnership (SLP) has unveiled an ambitious new vision aimed at driving economic growth, innovation, and job creation across South London. Launched in Wimbledon, the plan titled the BIG Ambition: South London Growth sets out a comprehensive roadmap to enhance the region's strengths, including health and life sciences, creative and digital industries, environmental innovation, and advanced manufacturing. This vision represents a concerted effort by the boroughs of Croydon, Kingston, Merton, Richmond, and Sutton to leverage local assets for an inclusive and sustainable economic future.

The strategy highlights South London’s existing economic muscle as a £38 billion economy, home to over 1.2 million residents, 55,000 businesses, and 550,000 jobs. Councillor Gareth Roberts, Chair of the SLP and Leader of Richmond Council, emphasised the importance of polycentric growth, stating that development must be inclusive and built from the ground up. Achieving this involves strengthening ties between businesses and universities to boost innovation and productivity, creating high-quality jobs in emerging sectors such as green technology, life sciences, and digital media, and upgrading transport and digital infrastructure — particularly orbital connections and full-fibre broadband.

The partnership’s vision aligns with broader strategic initiatives, including the London Growth Plan, which also recognises South London as a key driver of economic growth. London’s Deputy Mayor for Business, Howard Dawber, praised the SLP’s vision for reflecting the region’s real strengths in talent and innovation. Similarly, Laura Citron, CEO of London & Partners, highlighted South London's significant role in shaping the capital’s future as a hub of global innovation, referencing projects like the London Cancer Hub in Sutton and the contribution of six prominent universities providing skilled graduates.

Integral to this growth plan is the BIG South London programme, which facilitates innovation-led economic growth by fostering collaboration between local businesses and six universities. The programme supports productivity enhancements by providing affordable workspaces through a network of innovation and startup hubs spread across the five boroughs. Moreover, it offers an Innovation Support Programme, featuring mentoring, workshops, and access to academic expertise to nurture business innovation further.

Kingston University plays an active role in this ecosystem by linking academic talent with local enterprises through initiatives like the Innovation Voucher scheme, which grants businesses £5,000 to collaborate on innovative projects. Such university-business partnerships are seen as vital for bridging skill gaps and accelerating the translation of research into commercial success.

The South London Partnership also seeks greater devolution from the government, pushing for devolved decision-making powers and budget control to unlock significant growth potential. Their proposals include creating 20,000 new homes and over half a million jobs by 2036, underpinning infrastructure improvements and sustainable development. The emphasis on devolution reflects a broader push for locally driven economic strategies tailored to South London's unique character.

Efforts to foster business growth extend beyond infrastructure and investment. Initiatives like the intrapreneurship business growth accelerator, delivered in collaboration with Studio Zao, provide South London’s small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with workshops, mentoring, and coaching designed to cultivate innovation and create new services, products, and employment opportunities.

The combined approach of targeted investment, infrastructure development, skills integration, and a supportive innovation ecosystem positions South London as a dynamic contributor to London’s overall economic success. However, the South London Partnership underscores that realising this vision depends on securing commitment and investment from both government and private sector partners.

Councillor Roberts summed up the sentiment shared by the partnership and its stakeholders: “This is South London’s moment. With world-class institutions, a diverse and skilled population, and a strong local economy, we are already at the forefront of innovation, enterprise and sustainable growth. Now we need the backing to make it happen.”

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://twickenham.nub.news/news/local-news/new-ps38bn-vision-launched-to-drive-growth-and-innovation-across-south-london-263313), [[6]](https://www.richmond.gov.uk/news/news_february_2025/south_london_to_drive_growth_under_new_london_plan)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://twickenham.nub.news/news/local-news/new-ps38bn-vision-launched-to-drive-growth-and-innovation-across-south-london-263313), [[4]](https://news.croydon.gov.uk/south-london-partnership-launches-case-for-devolution/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://twickenham.nub.news/news/local-news/new-ps38bn-vision-launched-to-drive-growth-and-innovation-across-south-london-263313), [[6]](https://www.richmond.gov.uk/news/news_february_2025/south_london_to_drive_growth_under_new_london_plan)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://southlondonpartnership.co.uk/economy/big-south-london/), [[5]](https://www.southbankinnovation.co.uk/latest/big-south-london)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.kingston.ac.uk/collaborate/south-london-partnership)
* Paragraph 6 – [[4]](https://news.croydon.gov.uk/south-london-partnership-launches-case-for-devolution/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[7]](https://www.studiozao.com/case-study/big-south-london-business-growth-accelerator)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://twickenham.nub.news/news/local-news/new-ps38bn-vision-launched-to-drive-growth-and-innovation-across-south-london-263313)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://twickenham.nub.news/news/local-news/new-ps38bn-vision-launched-to-drive-growth-and-innovation-across-south-london-263313> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://southlondonpartnership.co.uk/economy/big-south-london/> - The BIG South London programme is an initiative by the South London Partnership, comprising the boroughs of Croydon, Kingston upon Thames, Merton, Richmond upon Thames, and Sutton. This programme aims to support innovation-led economic growth by assisting local businesses in enhancing productivity through collaboration with six regional universities. Additionally, it plans to establish affordable workspaces across all SLP boroughs via a network of seven innovation and start-up hubs, fostering a thriving business ecosystem in South London.
3. <https://www.kingston.ac.uk/collaborate/south-london-partnership> - Kingston University collaborates with the South London Partnership (SLP) to promote regional economic growth. By connecting academic expertise and student talent with local businesses, the university aids in improving business productivity, innovation, and career opportunities. Key initiatives include the BIG South London Programme, which offers knowledge exchange and business support hubs, and the Innovation Voucher scheme, providing £5,000 vouchers to businesses for collaborative projects with universities.
4. <https://news.croydon.gov.uk/south-london-partnership-launches-case-for-devolution/> - The South London Partnership has presented its case to the government for devolution to unlock significant growth opportunities in the region. The proposal includes creating thousands of new jobs and homes, with plans for 20,000 new homes and over half a million projected new jobs by 2036. The SLP seeks devolved decision-making powers, including budget control and business rate retention, to drive local economic development and infrastructure improvements.
5. <https://www.southbankinnovation.co.uk/latest/big-south-london> - BIG South London has partnered with universities such as London South Bank University, Kingston University, St Mary’s University Twickenham, and University of the Arts to deliver an Innovation Support Programme for businesses across South London. This programme offers a comprehensive package of interventions, including one-on-one mentoring, workshops, online seminars, and access to high-level academic expertise and consultancy support, aiming to foster innovation and growth in the local business community.
6. <https://www.richmond.gov.uk/news/news_february_2025/south_london_to_drive_growth_under_new_london_plan> - South London council leaders have welcomed the London Growth Plan, recognising the region's role in driving economic growth. The plan acknowledges South London's strengths, including leading research hubs, fast-growing creative industries, top universities, and world-class visitor attractions. The South London Partnership (SLP) supports the plan's focus on local economic hubs and innovation-led growth, highlighting the sub-region's contribution to London's broader economic success.
7. <https://www.studiozao.com/case-study/big-south-london-business-growth-accelerator> - Studio Zao collaborated with the South London Partnership to design and deliver an intrapreneurship business growth accelerator programme for SMEs in South London. The 8-week accelerator included workshops, mentoring, expert deep-dives, coaching, and digital tools, equipping teams from SMEs and council partners with the capabilities to innovate productively, aiming to create new businesses, services, products, and jobs, thereby boosting regional economic growth through innovation.