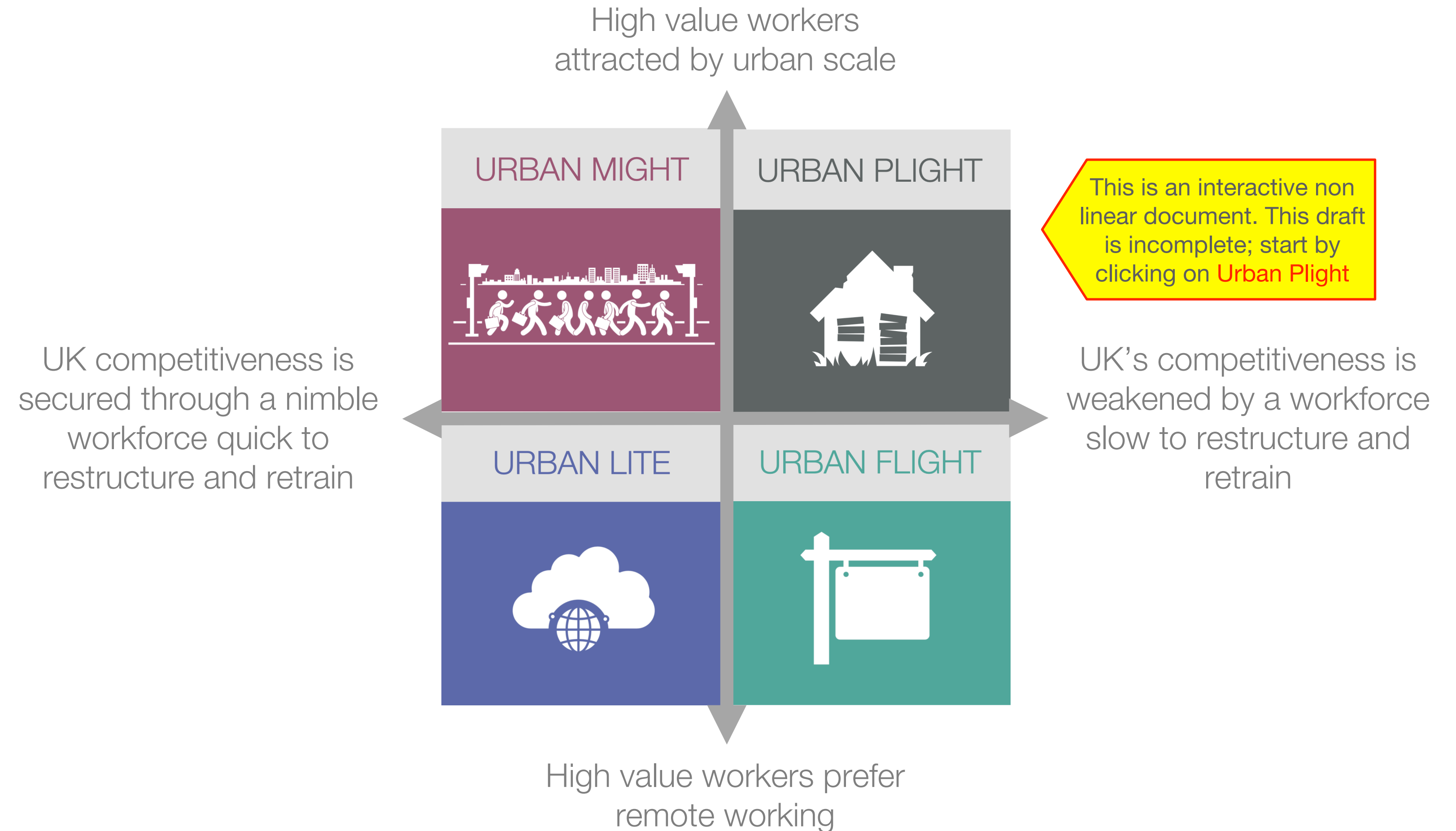


UNITE FUTURES Scenarios

UNITE
STUDENTS

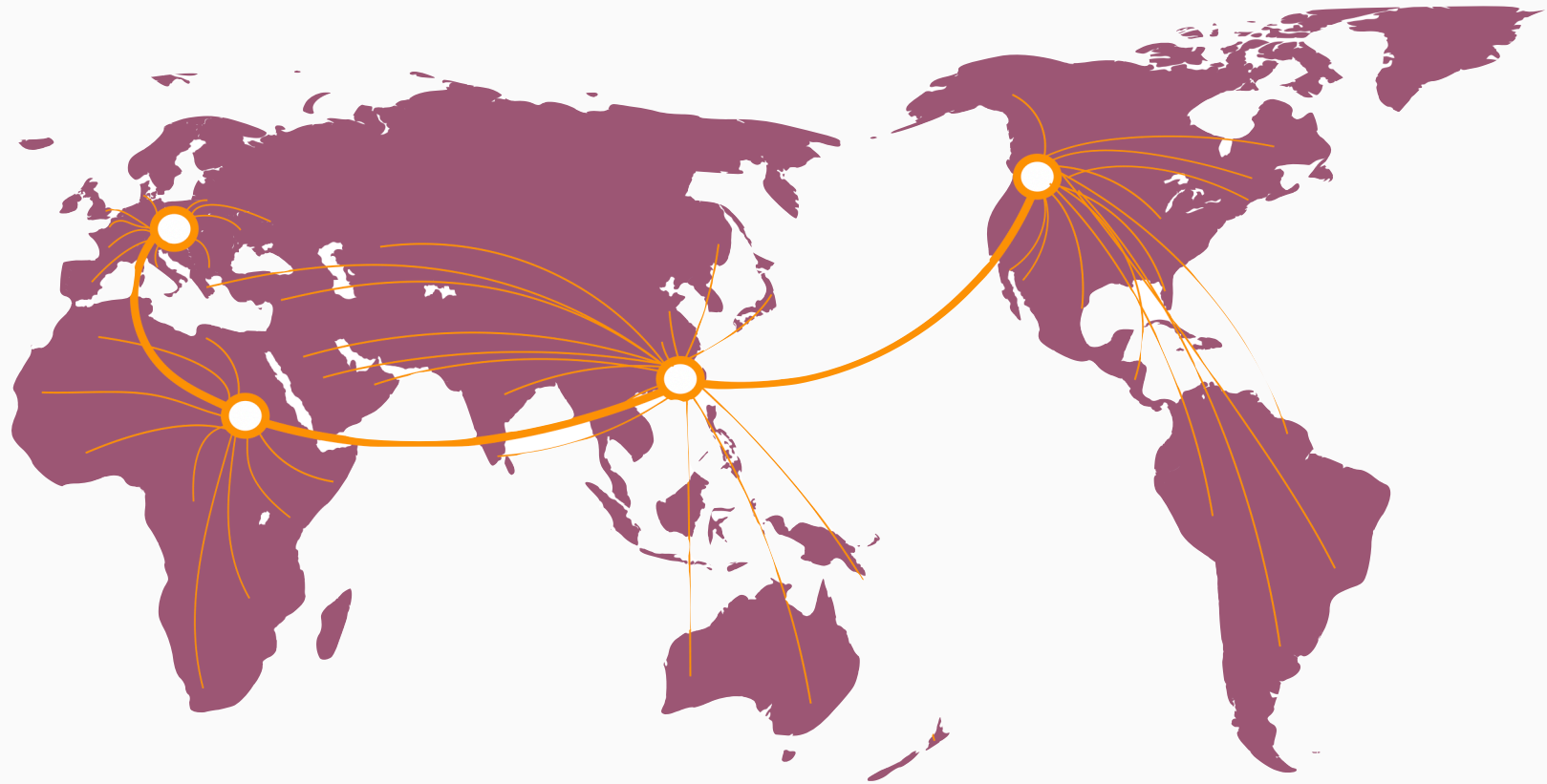




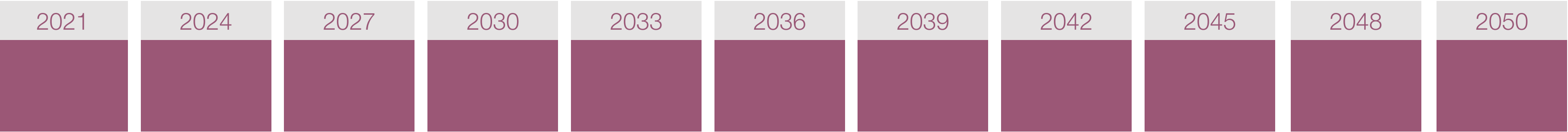
UK competitiveness is secured.
High value workers are attracted
by urban scale.



Urban Might describes a future where the UK is globally competitive and where high value workers are attracted by urban scale. UK industry is nimble and adaptable, underpinned by strong leadership and by a workforce which understands the need for continuous learning and reskilling to stay at the forefront of the global economy. Government works in partnership with industry to create the optimal market conditions and regulatory frameworks to encourage these behaviours. This regulatory partnership is highly effective. Global economic growth is driven up by the twin engines of presumption and human environmental renewal. The world's leading companies blend virtual and physical presence according to the competitive demands of their sectors and their customer base; the world's leading universities do the same. Opportunity is distributed around the UK's cities according to where the centres of excellence have emerged. There is a co-ordinated approach to tackling global warming, poverty, resource scarcity and increased security threats

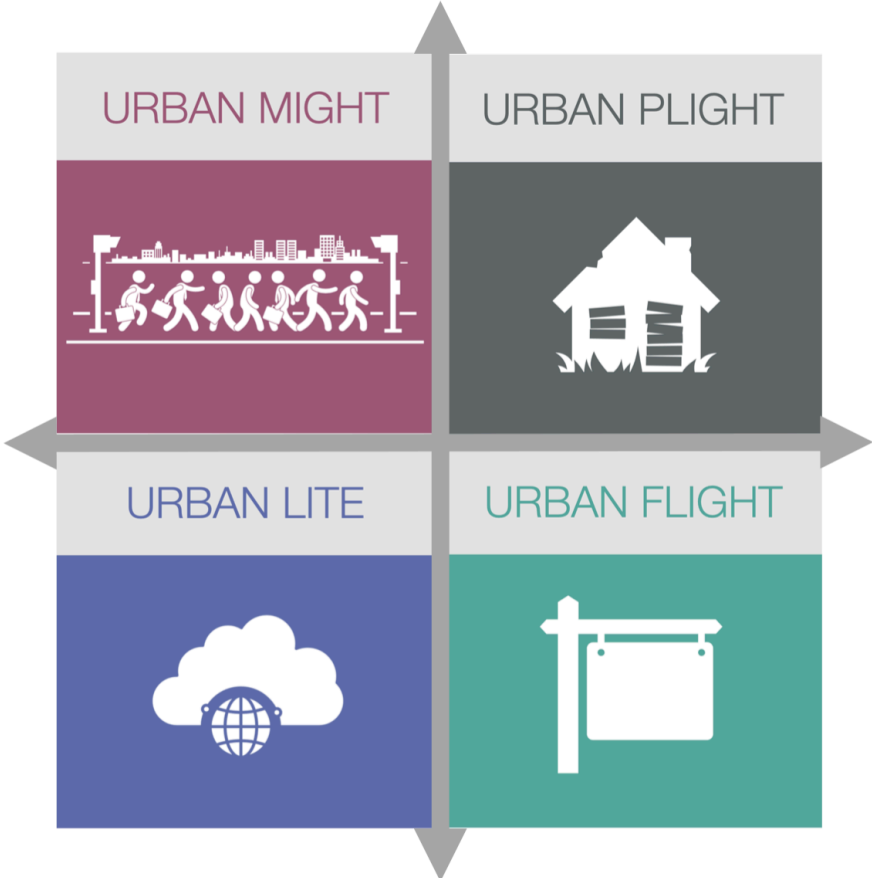


Next





UK competitiveness is secured.
High value workers are attracted
by urban scale.



The view from 2051

It is 20 April 2051. We’ve been on the journey to a transformed and united Kingdom for a quarter of a century now (“25 years today is equivalent to a century in old time” as one commentator snappily put it last year) and we have a lot to show for it. Foremost, of course, is that we are one of only two western European countries in the [world’s top 10 economies](#).

That success can be put down to many things but most analysts believe that event zero was UK business’s early adoption of the work passport in the early 2020s.

The first versions of the passport were crude, relying on daily testing and safe working spaces and the population was sceptical at first. As the technology developed, however, so did the benefits to passport holders: secure travel, rising isolation thresholds and agent detection systems in working environments. With a population of over 78 million people now – [70 million of whom live in the cities](#) – these controls have become essential for the UK’s economic success and social wellbeing and for the renaissance of our cities as centres of production.

Many people believe the cost of the UK’s success has been too high, citing loss of individual freedoms in particular. A look at countries which have taken a more relaxed approach and have chosen to support citizen rights above citizen responsibilities suggests they are wrong. Those countries have mainly struggled to contain continuing rounds of infection and have consequently struggled to sustain competitiveness; or, of course, to prevent a higher than necessary death rate.

UK business’s decision to act decisively and early may have been the match that started the fire but it was the workforce’s willingness to adapt and to retrain that provided the accelerant. The public sector, too, has done what some thought impossible by delivering a regulatory approach that works. STEERING BRITAIN, its renewal strategy, has built on our natural talent for invention and innovation and has fanned the flames. It has also ensured that those parts of the higher education sector that can sit at the top table are able to do so.

Back

The partnership is serving Britain well. We are tackling the three economic challenges of the age – keeping up with the competition; securing more than our fair share of the pie in the process; and re-engineering wealth distribution to maintain social stability – and we are also punching above our weight in the global environmental renewal effort.

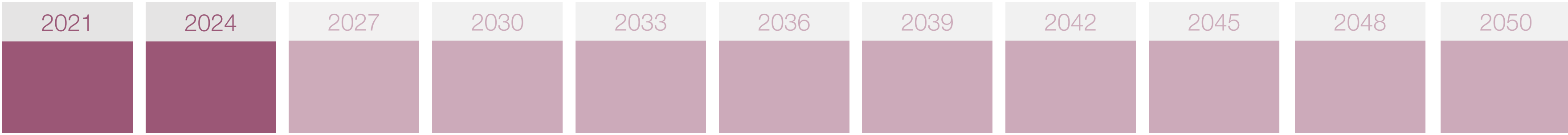
The long wave

Crises are like icebergs – it’s not what you can see that creates the challenge, it’s what’s lurking under the surface. And what was lurking under the surface in the 2020s changed everything.

What the UK Conservative party saw when they won a landslide election in December 2019 was the chance to ‘get Brexit done’. In the early days of that first full Johnstone administration, Brexit was the thing. There were other ideas on the political agenda, but Brexit – which had dominated public discourse and created confusion and division in the UK and beyond – was the big one. Nobody – anywhere – paid any attention to the report by the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission of a localised cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan, Hubei Province.

2020 and 2021 were dominated by coronavirus. The pandemic didn’t last long, but by the time the world had it under control in 2022, three things had happened. Firstly, the world learned a very practical and meaningful lesson into what ‘everyone is connected’ really meant in the physical domain; secondly, the UK and other developed economies saw a surge of appreciation for – and interest in joining – the scientific community; and thirdly, the UK became a world leader in the science and business of mass health. This last was a fully deserved, if somewhat unintended, strategic repositioning of the UK on the global stage.

All three things laid the foundations upon which the UK’s resurgence has been built but it was the second – the rising appreciation of science and technology – that was perhaps most influential. Britain spent the rest of the 2020s and the early 2030s riding the long wave of technological development that changed every part of the economy and society as the world rebooted. Each technology – big data,

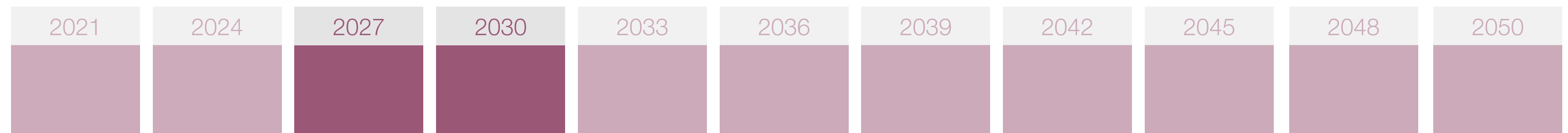




the internet of things, machine learning, artificial intelligence, robotics, 3D printing, biotechnology, nanotechnology, renewable energy technologies, satellite and drone technologies - created new challenges. Each country that rose to those challenges transformed – in no time and with much less pain that had ever been expected –working practices, wealth creation and labour markets.

Back to work

...



URBAN MIGHT



URBAN PLIGHT



UK competitiveness is weakened.
High value workers are attracted
by urban scale

URBAN FLIGHT



URBAN LITE



Urban Plight describes a future where the UK is globally uncompetitive and where high value workers are attracted by urban scale. The UK has suffered a long decline, brought on by the perfect storm of an ageing population, worsening environmental degradation and a legacy infrastructure in urgent need of upgrading. People have flooded into the cities looking for work, care and access to services. Government, in command and control mode and with limited options, has focussed on the regeneration of strategic cities. These are now the focus for everything - intervention, resources, population, successful universities - but the scale of the task facing government is massive. The higher education sector has been consolidated to reflect regional requirements and is focussed on local need. Public services outside the strategic cities have limited money and little scope to make a difference and many communities are severely blighted by drug use and related crime. Trust has declined catastrophically and social cohesion is under threat.



Next

2021	2024	2027	2031	2033	2036	2041	2044	2046	2048	2051
LDCs an accelerator for SARS-CoV-2	20% of world population goes hungry	Spiralling private and public debt in the UK	Business futures tax, personal ownership tax introduced	Government launches its Regeneration Plan	Creation of 9 megacity clusters	Relocation and rebalancing of the population	HE sector consolidates around meacities	Increase in non residential skills based microcredentials	Trust in government at an all time low	UK Government relocates to the regions



UK competitiveness is weakened.
High value workers are attracted
by urban scale

The view from 2051

It is 21 August 2051 and today the UK Government announced that the final stage of relocating the UK civil service to the regions is complete.

Speaking in the lower chamber of the VHP (Virtual Houses of Parliament) the Chancellor spoke about her immense pride in 'completing this historic modernisation of our government to better meet the needs of our citizens across the regions as we look to the second half of the 21st century'. The irony of her statement has been lost on no-one. The Chancellor's 'historic modernisation' began over thirty years ago and should have been completed long before now.

Friends of the government, of whom there are still some, have been quick to point out that successive administrations have been rather busy in recent years trying to tackle the system breaks that needed to be fixed first and that the mechanisms of government simply had to wait their turn. It's a fair comment. There has been a lot of work to get to this point.

And of course, the government has had its hands full creating the 6 megacity clusters that it expects will provide a focus for Britain's regeneration. It would have been a poor plan indeed if they hadn't redistributed the dismantled components of Whitehall to the right places.

While many will want to applaud the Chancellor and her government for their heroic efforts, the worry is that all this is too big, too chaotic and too late to stop Britain's continued slide down the world rankings. The worthy work that government has done in the last two decades to strengthen the megacity clusters has inevitably created a three tier society as resources, opportunities and services have been channelled into them. And, by the by, away from everywhere else. It's not exactly that government is pulling everything away from the satellites, but it can be hard for citizens of those place to believe that their tax money and opportunities have not been redistributed.

Today's announcement about the regions signals the end of localism. Although the megacities have mayors, their purpose today is more symbolic than at any time in the past fifty years and the government has made it plain that any further fragmentation of Britain's national effort will condemn the country to languish in the middle of the world rankings. The government has also made it plain that it is their responsibility to work together to lift Britain up.

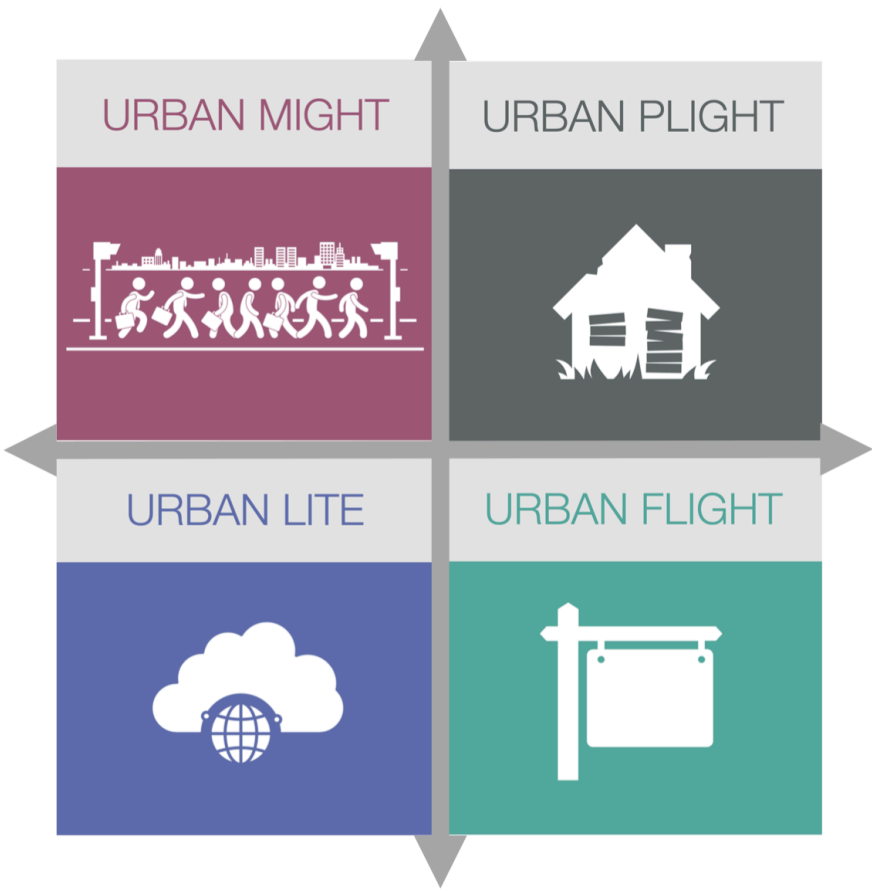
Good luck with that agenda. Cities across the UK – both mega and regular – continue to be reminded that it is not infrastructure, connectivity or services that make a place work, it is people. And, having moved people around to suit its policy needs, government has yet to regain their trust.

A plague on all their houses

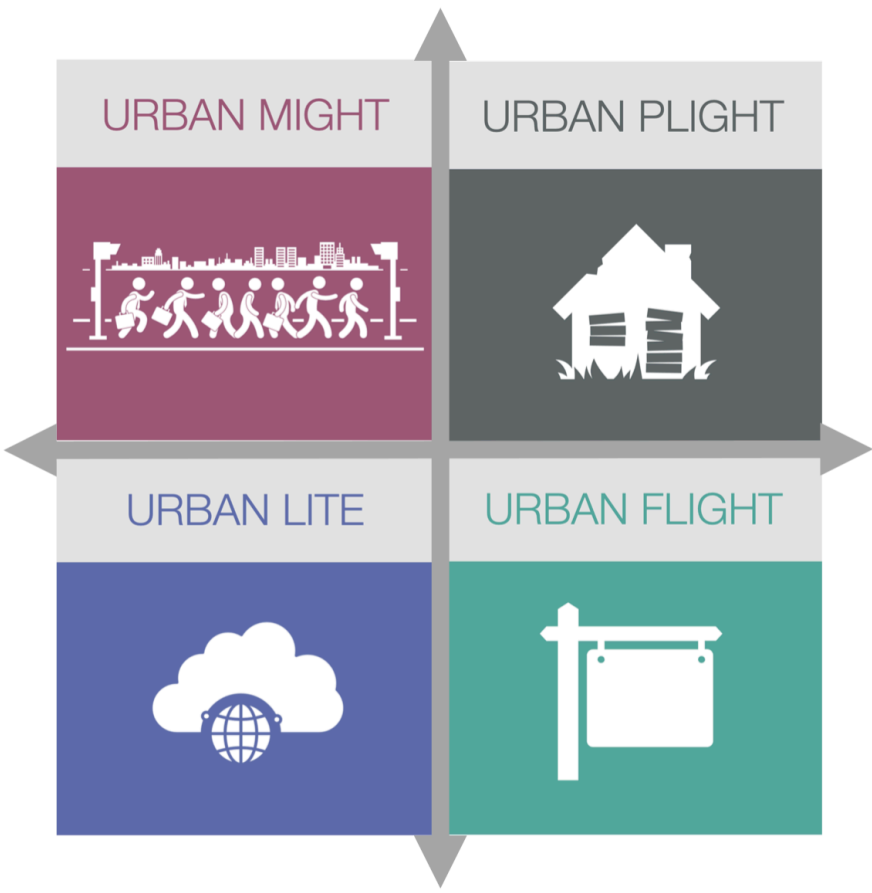
By early 2021, governments in the developed economies were optimistic that they had the crisis under control. National vaccination programmes ran throughout that year and, recognising that beating the pandemic required all countries to be immunised, the Group of Seven (G7) economic powers agreed to intensify cooperation and increase funding for the rollout of vaccines in the world's poorest countries to \$7.5 billion.

Ultimately, the G7 offer had little value. The wings came off the global vaccination programme before it could take off as corruption and incompetence meant that logistical bottlenecks were left unfixed, no expanded healthcare delivery systems were put in place and no proper communication strategies were put in place to prepare people for vaccine programmes. The consequence of these failures were immediately clear; the LDC bloc became an accelerator for the sustained emergence and transmission of new and increasingly virulent strains of the virus that existing vaccines offered limited protection against.

As governments in the first world dithered over the LDCs, their own citizens – particularly their younger, poorer and BAME citizens and those susceptible to anti vaccination propaganda – began to resist the vaccine. Liberal governments like the UK chose not to make the vaccine mandatory.



2021	2024	2027	2031	2033	2036	2041	2044	2046	2048	2051
LDCs an accelerator for SARS-CoV-2									Trust in government at an all time low	UK Government relocates to the regions



Other governments had no such qualms, even perhaps welcoming the opportunity. China - and some other East Asian countries - took an authoritarian approach using track and trace and enforced house quarantine to control the spread of infection. Some of this was – of course – about public health and safety but the Chinese government’s actions were mainly designed to put digital technology at the heart of social control. From mass surveillance, tracking intelligence, and internet censorship to the use of social credit systems, augmented data-collection capabilities, and big data, China’s new normal expanded its move against civil liberties.

Losing balance

By the mid 2020s, the global economy was (to quote the World Economic Forum) “ravaged, with entire sections of some developing countries’ economies wiped out entirely.”

The G20 raided their piggy banks, pumping out money to support businesses, to bolster global markets and to boost national social security programmes. These measures initially provided a lifeline for the millions of small business owners forced to close their doors and the many millions of workers laid-off across the economy from the retail and leisure to the automotive and transport sectors.

The G20s citizens were gently protected. It was easy for those in work to convince themselves that things weren’t so bad; and even those who’d lost their job were still able to take their social security cheques to a local supermarket fully stocked with affordable food.

It was not the same in the LDCs. Oil prices plummeted, currencies appreciated, export and foreign investment competitiveness fell, tourism all but stopped and economies were left completely destabilised and scrambling for survival. The chronically hungry, already numbering 700 million before 2021, reached 1 billion during 2022 and 1.5 billion by 2024. In its first year alone, the pandemic erased two decades of progress in poverty reduction.

The G20’s fight over whose responsibility it was to support these failing economies is now regarded as something of a watershed in geopolitics. At the 2025 summit, Japan, South Korea, India, and China pledged to double their development aid for one year if other members would follow with at least a 10% uplift.

Many did; and the resulting \$250 billion of special humanitarian aid was put to work over the following decade to improve infrastructure and communications technology, to build better roads, to increase access to cell phones for nearly 30 million rural residents, enabling them to bolster their income by accessing information on crop prices and weather forecasts and to strengthen the overall health infrastructure.

One notable exception to the countries that pledged additional aid was the UK.

Close to the edge

Britain’s unwillingness to pay was not a decision it made lightly; but it had little choice. The domestic situation in the late 2020s was not good. Furlough had been phased out, creditors were demanding that debts be paid, company closures and unemployment were at an all time high. A decade of winter storms and flooding had inflicted significant and sustained damage to communities and infrastructure. Public services were at breaking point. Making more payments to help others when so many people at home were in trouble would have been political suicide.

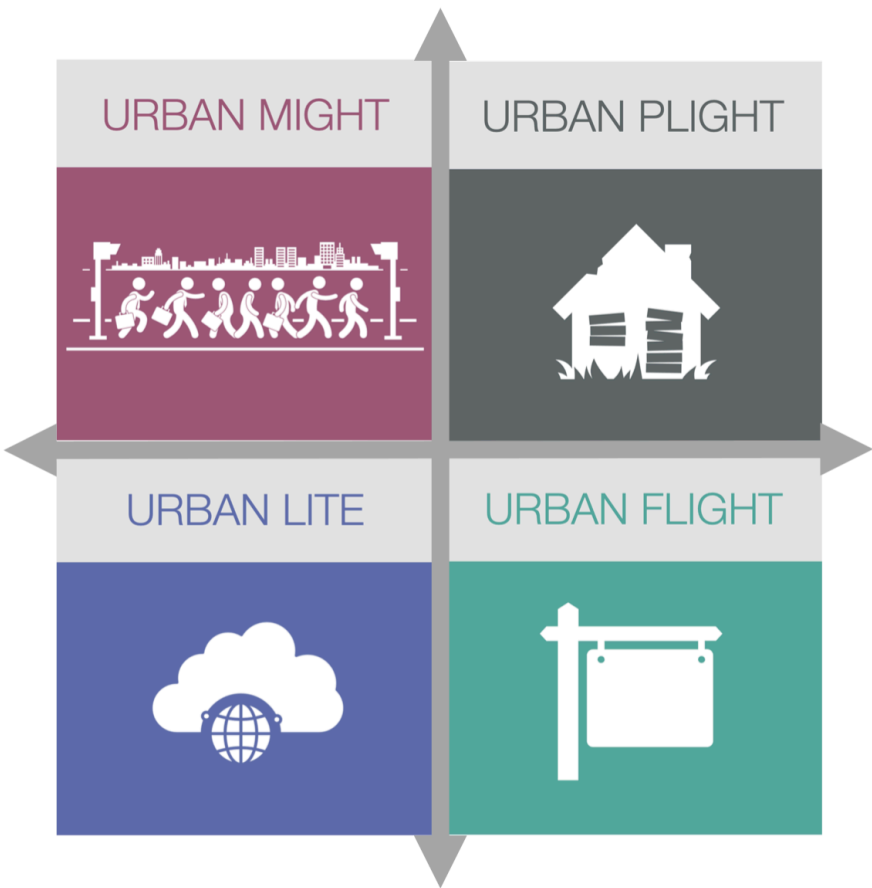
The run up to the 2029 election was a period of spiralling public and personal debt. As furlough ended, the number of unemployed seeking help broke the JobCentre servers. Most of the newly unemployed had always worked, had never had to claim benefits and had no idea of their route back into work.

Emotions ran high; people were ashamed to find themselves unemployed, angry at the injustice and the failure of the system to get them back to work quickly, offended that the government seemed to be ‘checking up on them’ and outraged at the quality of work that was on offer. Some dealt with the situation badly; some coped better, retaining the hope that things would return to normal soon. None of them had any idea how to manage on £400 a month. Most of them didn’t.

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LDCs an accelerator for SARS-CoV-2	20% of world population goes hungry	Spiralling private and public debt in the UK							Trust in government at an all time low	UK Government relocates to the regions



The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP as it was known at that time) was set up to fail. Swamped by numbers and with few opportunities to get people into work, government initially introduced its new StartBack scheme to provide training and employment experience to the under 40s and provide a soft route back to work. Participants were given up to two 6 month work placements at the minimum wage - paid for by the government – in the hope that employers would take them on full time at the end.

The scheme was good for employers – who got free labour for 6 months – but not so good for trainees. They quickly discovered that employers preferred to let them go after 6 months and get another freebie from the vast labour pool; and that the training on offer was designed for low skill levels that were cheap but increasingly irrelevant.

People felt trapped, whether in work or out of it. Stress levels rose. Then divorce rates. When the government introduced its business futures tax in 2030 – taxing businesses on what their turnover was projected to be in the coming financial year - and its personal ownership tax in 2031 – taxing individuals for luxury goods they already owned and had already paid for (cars, homes, computers, for example) - suicide rates went up as well.

Eroding communities

The storms that battered the UK throughout the 2020s inflicted significant and sustained damage on communities and infrastructure.

Most of those communities were outside the main urban areas and some received government support - but many more did not. Those living in areas of particular risk began to feel like the responsibility for taking action was down to them and them alone. As concern grew that government had abdicated its responsibility to them, many residents began to evaluate their life choices. With hindsight, it's no surprise that net migration out of the main cities slowed. By 2032 it was – at less than 10,000 a year – a fraction of what it had been a decade earlier.

That might have been bad enough for rural and coastal areas trying to stay afloat (as one commentator rather unfortunately put it at the time) but these headline figures masked a challenging truth: that people were *leaving* rural and coastal towns for the cities where they believed their lives would be less blighted by the consequences of climate change.

It was generally true that the people who moved to the cities had cash in the bank and a job to go to. Those who remained – already the more disadvantaged members of their communities – were older, in poorer health, with limited income and with very few job opportunities. The metrics for social vulnerability and resilience to climate change began to align; and another vicious cycle began.

The radical road

And so, in 2033, the UK government launched its regeneration plan, setting out its fifty year vision of the UK and roadmapping how it would use new technology and fiscal incentives to – literally – move Britain into pole position to return to global authority by the end of the century.

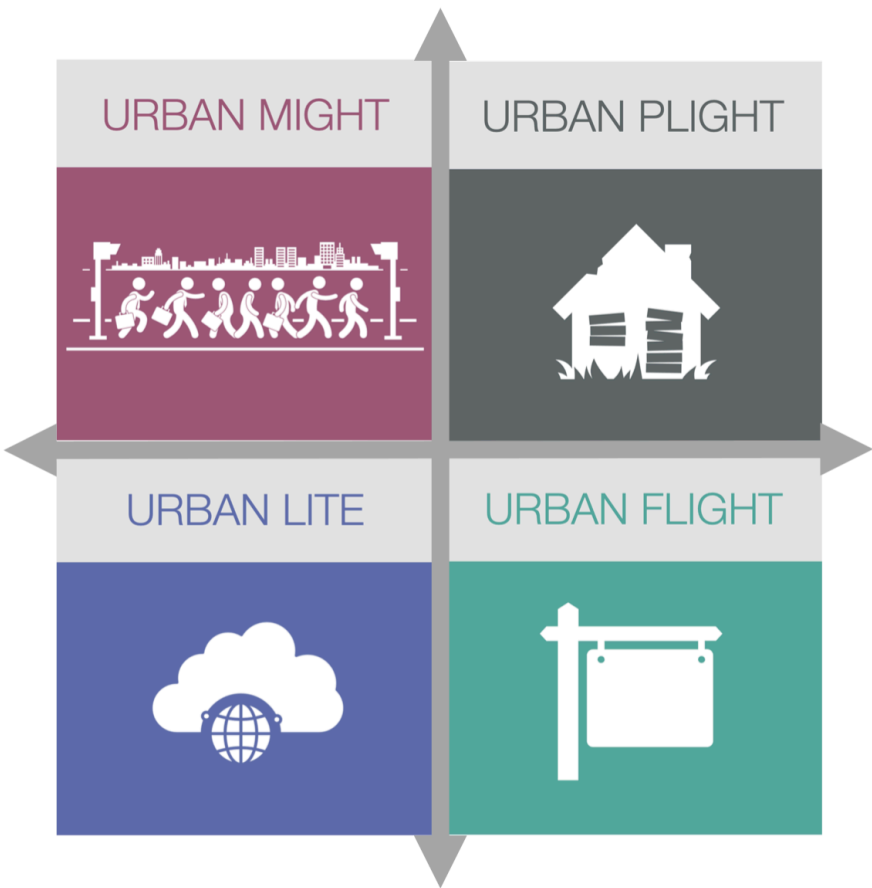
The strategy was a long time in gestation as local and national government worked together to take a long term view of the future of the UK's cities. The plan was (still is) ambitious, costly - and absolutely necessary. 30 years ago, it would have been hugely controversial and would probably never have been passed but Britain in the early 2030s was close to collapse and needed a radical road out.

At the heart of the plan is the creation of 9 megacity clusters based in North Scotland (Aberdeen and surrounding areas) Central Scotland (the Glasgow Edinburgh axis), Northern Ireland, the North East (Newcastle), the North West (the Manchester Sheffield Bradford Leeds group) the Centre (Birmingham Coventry Leicester) the South East (the London cluster), Wales (Cardiff and Swansea) and the South West (Bristol).

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Each megacity acted as the focus for regional development. Phase 1 concentrated on building the housing required to accommodate the population. Government guidance demanded intelligent re-development within cities before new housing be added to city edges and beyond. Planning rules were changed to ensure that all developments were mixed use; environmental impact – energy use, supply chain carbon cost and 25 year emission profile - was the first question asked by planners and developers.

In phase 2, still under way, government is offering incentives – jobs, training, education and housing – to encourage relocation and rebalancing of the population. This, of course, is what has accelerated the relocation of the civil service. Those employees face Hobsons choice - move, or stop aside - but the indications are that significant numbers of the professions currently in London and the South East are willing to relocate. This is a positive step towards the aim of reducing population in the London cluster by 15% by the end of the century.

Phase 3 will see intra cluster transportation services strengthened to minimise car ownership. The plan is that citizens will enjoy safe and easy access to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking, and cycling. Car ownership will not be banned but the aspiration is that megacity clusters will provide alternatives so that people no longer feel the need to own a car. That is already happening; increasingly, vehicles are owned by private or public providers and used on a pay as you go basis.

Digital bridges, spatial divides

The final phase - inter cluster mobility or ICM - is lagging somewhat. Government remains somewhat blasé about the fact that Britain’s shiny new cities still rely on old rolling stock, inconsistent infrastructure and unreliable and old tech based services for the movement of goods and people between them. And today, in 2051, different parts of the UK network managed by different organisations still seem to have trouble communicating with each other. It could be another decade or more before this is fixed.

The focus of the plan to date has been the reorganization of Britain’s population and its economic geography. That has been undoubtedly stellar work but it is that focus - on places, not on people - that has created the social challenges Britain now faces.

Foremost is the concern that the megacities will be magnets for funding that will pull everything away from the rest of UK. Second is that they will be magnets for young people and that the interstitial cities will prove to be nothing but feeder towns. Third is that they will grow too big and ultimately destroy what was distinctive and loved about local communities.

Higher education

Demand is rising slowly after a difficult few years. The sector began to decline in the late 2020s, partly as a result of muddled messaging about whether it was better to go to a physical campus or to learn on line, partly due to the fall in international student numbers and partly because the public purse strings got tighter. And tighter.

A number of institutions did real harm to their own reputations and to the sector as a whole by focussing more on revenue than on investment in new learning channels and processes. They were slow to recognise a cultural shift in what the student body wanted from the university experience: education first, service quality second, blend it yourself flexibility third and the lived experience fourth. Of course - as many universities argued at the time - this preference list was somewhat simplistic for the sector as a whole; but it was essential for individual institutions to recognise what their own customer base wanted and where their competitive advantage lay.

The parlous state of Britain’s finances in the early 2030s meant that government simply could no longer shore up the sector as a whole. This, combined with the demographic dip of that decade pushed some institutions close to the edge. The rise in degrees taught in English in China, Taiwan and elsewhere pushed them over.

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UK competitiveness is weakened.
High value workers are attracted
by urban scale

The sector’s consolidation was it saving grace. The process began in the mid 2030s as a response to the changing market conditions and ended a decade later as part of the government’s regeneration plan. Today, each megacity has one large university - often with different campuses - which offers the lived student experience. Courses last for 60 weeks run over two two years, are wholly funded by the student and are competitive to get in to. They are also focussed on subjects of strategic importance - STEM, medicine, law, wellbeing, for example - and conduct research as required by local regeneration need (a condition of centralised funding).

Some of the former Russell Group universities live on outside the megacities. For some - Oxford, Cambridge, St Andrews, for instance - that is a positive blessing. For others, such as Aberystwyth, Brighton and Canterbury, it feels more like a matter of time before their numbers become unsustainable.

Each megacity also has at least one small university which is geared towards plugging national and regional skills gaps. These institutions have a highly vocational focus and deliver a mix of courses from full length degrees (not that many takers) to modular micro credentials. Students here are part funded by government as part of the reskilling programme that is finally in place to support economic renewal. Mainly, these cater for non residential, part time undergraduates



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URBAN MIGHT



URBAN PLIGHT



UK competitiveness is weakened.
High value workers are attracted
by urban scale

URBAN FLIGHT



URBAN LITE



Each of the other scenarios has
an overview and the first page
of the full scenario. Navigate to
each using the 2x2

URBAN MIGHT



URBAN PLIGHT



URBAN LITE



URBAN FLIGHT



Supporting scans

POPULATION MATTERS

The global population will
continue to grow, will be
more middle class and will
tend to live in cities.

MENTAL HEALTH

More of us, including
students, are experiencing
mental health issues,
especially during Covid.

TRUTHS, HALF TRUTHS AND LIES

We live in a culture of fake
news which threatens our
institutions and our trust in
government.

MOBILITY AS A SERVICE

The integration of various
modes of transport along
with information and
payment functions into a
single mobility service

AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

Autonomous trucks are
being used in trials for
running between
warehouses and delivering
goods for Lidl

FULL CIRCLE

The economic, and
political, future will lie in
Asia. Where and how will
they lead?

FAIR'S FAIR

Covid has exposed the
scale of inequality in the
UK. It also provides an
impetus for change.

JOBS OF TOMORROW

New jobs will require
constant retraining and are
likely to require a mix of
technical and soft skills.

THE 'C' FACTOR

The economy post Covid
will bring new challenges
and accelerate existing
trends.

PLANNING AHEAD

Government's new
approach to planning will
see easier permitted
developments and up front
protection for the
environment

SOFT POWER DOWN

BREXIT has damaged the
UK's reputation around the
world and signals further
international decline

TRUST NO-ONE

Trust in governments and
institutions is falling around
the world, particularly as a
result of Covid-19

KEEPING IT LOCAL?

The government has set
great store by its levelling
up agenda. How will it
deliver on those promises?

OUT OF AFRICA

The number of African
students enrolled in
Chinese universities has
increased by 4,549% in a
15 year period

BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Taiwan's education ministry
is driving expansion of
degrees and postgraduate
courses taught in English

TOO MANY GRADUATES

42% of the core skills
required to perform existing
jobs will have changed by
2022

ALTERNATIVE CREDENTIALS

The key to making higher
education reach non-
traditional groups who need
to upskill or reskill

STUDENTS AS CONSUMERS

Students will demand
money back - and
compensation - if they
receive it on satisfactory
service

THE COST OF THE PANDEMIC

The pandemic could cost
the Westminster
government up to £12
billion extra in higher
education funding for
England

CLOSURES...?

Some existing universities
should be closedown and
new ones be established to
save the HE sector

MERGERS...?

A strategic restructuring of
further and higher
education?

HE'S ROLE IN RECOVERY

The HE sector could play a
role in recovery post Covid.



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2021

LDCs an
accelerator for
SARS-CoV-2

2024

20% of world
population goes
hungry

2027

Spiralling private
and public debt
in the UK

2031

Business futures
tax, personal
ownership tax
introduced

2033

Government
launches its
Regeneration
Plan

2036

Creation of 9
megacity
clusters

2041

Relocation and
rebalancing of
the population

2044

HE sector
consolidates
around
megacities

2046

Increase in non
residential skills
based
microcredentials

2048

Trust in
government at
an all time low

2051

UK Government
relocates to the
regions



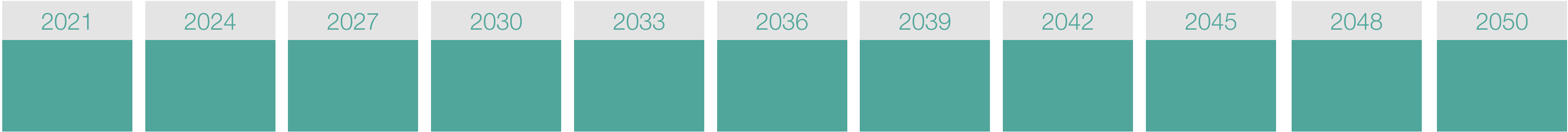
UK competitiveness is weakened.
High value workers prefer remote working.

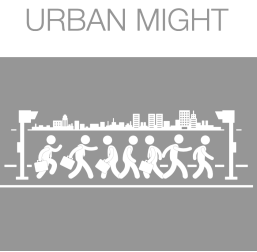


Urban Flight describes a future where the UK is globally uncompetitive and where high value workers prefer to work remotely. Britain’s lower performance economically is not simply due to a lack of productivity or investment by the big corporates; rather it is a lifestyle choice by an educated and concerned population that watched its government pursue economic prosperity at all costs well into the 2030s - with catastrophic results. Now, the electorate has chosen to step off the economic escalator and to protect the long term wellbeing of individuals, society and the planet. The UK has consequently adopted circular economy practices, invested in environmental industries and pursued a simpler life. Travel within cities is green and clean; travel between cities and overseas is rationed. People are less well off financially but social capital is much higher. Government has developed a green infrastructure which will be rolled out across the UK. Higher education is one of the UK’s success stories, exporting education and research services with a minimal footprint.



Next





UK competitiveness is weakened.
High value workers prefer remote
working.



The view from 2051

It is 28 November 2051 and today's news that UK Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has declined for the 25th consecutive quarter is no real surprise given the recent trajectory – but in these challenging times, it is still, nevertheless, an achievement worth celebrating. All the more so since the UK's Gross Domestic Quality (GDQ) has increased by 2.8% for the 3rd year in a row.

No wonder Britons are happier.

The results are a validation of everything the UK has done in the three decades since the covid pandemic of the early 20s was followed by the mental health pandemic of the late 20s that utterly debilitated UK society. Like coronavirus, anxiety and depression were indiscriminate, attacking those in work as well as those outside it.

The sustained drive to work from home – driven by business leaders with spacious homes and people to fix any connectivity problems - was simply too much for most. For those who relied on work for human connection, one lonely day drifted into another. For those who were unsure of themselves and who needed encouragement and guidance, managers were remote - in all senses. For those desperately juggling work, family and children's lives from one table in the kitchen, everything was balanced on a knife edge; and they could easily fall off if school closed again at the last minute or if food stocks were low in the supermarket.

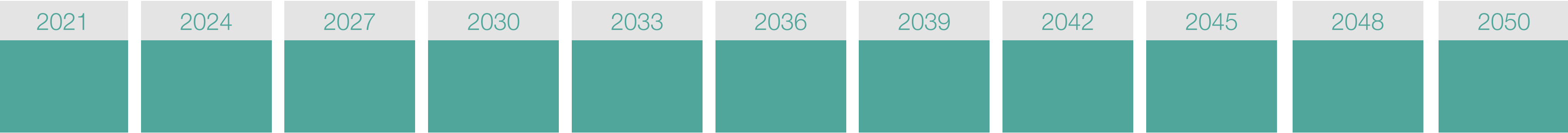
The generation who once watched their parents struggle and who felt anxious, confused and sidelined by the political system have grown up now and are the ones making the decisions about our future. They care about their own and their communities' wellbeing, about their children's health and prospects and about fixing the planet. More of them have lived with scarcity than their parents ever did and believe unnecessary consumption to be indulgent, selfish and destructive.

That is why Brits are happy now. We chose the path of lower consumption long before it was forced on us. We don't resent it the way other societies do and because we've been doing this longer than others, we are more expert at it. Circular economic practice is embedded. People eat better, exercise more and demand healthier goods and services. Product leasing and sharing has increased and ownership has declined. Goods without inbuilt longevity and a traceable environmental footprint do not sell.

We have strengthened our rural communities and centres of production and built extensive e-infrastructure outside the cities to strengthen them. Peri-urban areas are growing bigger as families diffuse away from city centres, moving towards greener, healthier pastures. Our larger cities still have some way to go to improve the many are consequently losing population.

Britain is chill. No wonder then that it has become one of the most popular global destinations for knowmads. They come here more often, stay for longer and contribute more to local society.

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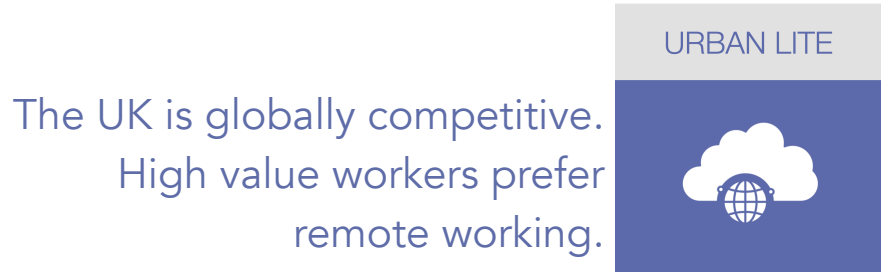


The UK is globally competitive.
High value workers prefer
remote working.



Urban Lite describes a future where UK is globally competitive and where high value workers prefer to work remotely. Britain has invested heavily in the knowledge, ideas and application of creativity that has made it one of the foremost knowledge economies in the world. Most of the population now works in cyberspace rather than in physical space and full fibre broadband is everywhere. Increasing numbers of the population have moved out of expensive and congested cities to the fresher air and greener vistas of the country. The continuing exodus of high value, high spending and demanding consumers means that investment in city infrastructure is less important at present. Of course, Britain's high value workers are not necessarily British; or even located in the UK. Equally, those living in Britain do not necessarily work in Britain; the wealth generators are digital nomads who work around the world and live around the world too. Nomads, as the name suggests, move around a lot, seeking new experiences and new friendships as they go. They tend to locate for short spells in places that attract them and they demand high quality services, good facilities, flexible living and letting arrangements and superfast connectivity. Reputations are made and lost on the social media platforms that nomads hang out in. HE provision is global and borderless, is delivered collaboratively and is now largely focused around an integrated suite of transferable tertiary education credentials.





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The view from 2051

It is 28 July 2051, one month after Birmingham’s new and much anticipated City Museum opens to the public.

The Museum offers a truly diverting experience. The recommendation that visitors allow three hours to go round seems overly generous when booking your time slot, but there is so much to see - and in such detail - once inside that many people are staying longer or booking a second visit immediately.

It’s very hands on. Visitors are able to experience every aspect of the working day from the crowded tube journey to the private cubicle, physical workstation (complete with keyboard and screen) and glass fronted ‘meeting rooms’ that feel small, oppressive and must have been wholly uncondusive to work. Visitors can even enjoy a meeting experience, selecting from a wide menu of themes. 5 minutes of this is enough to make you wonder how anyone ever got anything done. The Whitehall Teams Experience - Teams was an early software tool - is particularly enlightening

It’s a nice touch that the Museum is only open between the hours of 9 and 5 Monday to Friday, although it’s not clear how long this will last. Contrary to rumours being moderated by the chatbots, these hours weren’t chosen to let the west coasters in before they start work; nor to prevent the antipodeans getting there after work (surely they can instruct their diaries better...). If you get the chance - and know why the City Museum is open at such curious times - explain to a knomad of your acquaintance. Their reaction will be priceless.

Many visitors are struck by just how much stuff their parents and grandparents needed to work in an office; and astonished at the physical space it required. This is particularly striking in the ‘covid-safe’ office, where more than one visitor has recorded in the feedback that the rental cost per worker figure must have been miscalculated. They haven’t, of course.

There was, it transpires, a lot of noise in the old days. Somehow, even although there can be a lot of noise in today’s workspaces, it seems more *primitive* in the Museum. Perhaps this is artistic licence, but it is very visceral.

Absorbing? Certainly.

A legacy today’s workers can learn from? Not so much.

A visit to the City Museum will leave you intrigued, fascinated and thankful. If there is one thing that could be changed in this excellent Museum it is a clearer sense of the journey the world has been on in the last generation or two and how we came so far so fast.

Clouds on the horizon

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