



Looking Up

Northern cities are supercharging their economies with clusters of successful firms in high-growth industry sectors, says **Ian Wylie**

Many Northern cities have been forecast a miserable future because of spending cuts and their dependency on public-sector jobs, yet recent reports by HSBC/The Future Laboratory and Centre for Cities have identified the likes of Leeds and Newcastle as “super cities”, poised to deliver greater-than-expected growth and job creation.

Newcastle

Just across the Tyne Bridge from Newcastle, Gateshead is becoming a hub for the digital and media sector. Herb Kim, founder of the annual Thinking Digital Conference, doffs his cap to Gateshead City Council. “Its work creating icons such as the *Angel Of The North*, the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art (above), the Gateshead Millennium Bridge and the Sage Gateshead music centre says that Gateshead is serious about valuing digital, creative and cultural

industries,” he explains. A new Northern Design Centre will give the city another method of attracting digital and design companies. Kim’s one to watch is Cumron Ashtiani of Atomhawk, a company which has worked with Newcastle-based TH_NK to develop artwork for the new JK Rowling online presence, *Pottermore*.

Leeds

Historically, Leeds has always been a commercial centre, with bankers, brokers and advisors supporting the trades. But the growth of building societies and insurance companies in the region has created a strong financial services cluster, which has weathered the recent storms. “We have a great skills base here, which is supported by the universities, colleges and experienced professionals who can take on all types of work,” says Howard Kew,

chief executive of Financial Leeds. Kew’s ones to watch are the Leeds, Yorkshire and Skipton building societies, which are in the vanguard of the revitalised building society movement.

Manchester

Across the Pennines, five BBC departments have moved to MediaCity in Salford, building on nearby Manchester’s rich broadcasting heritage. “I’m particularly excited about *BBC Breakfast*’s move to the region next year, as this is a five-day-a-week show – a juggernaut that will provide masses of opportunities,” says Maureen Walker of Northwest Vision and Media. “Opportunities will reverberate throughout the North as a whole.” Walker’s one to watch is *Firestep*, a subsidiary of Impossible Kids, whose recent commissions include a pre-school version of *University Challenge*.