BondBryan:
Fairhursts

Roundtable Summary

Unlocking Northern Innovation: Bridging Science, Space & Scale

Hosted by BondBryan:Fairhursts, Mills& Reeve, Track Real Estate

On September 30 Bond Bryan: Fairhursts in collaboration with Mills& Reeve, and Track Real Estate hosted a roundtable lunch at the Treehouse Hotel in Manchester, bringing together industry leaders from academia, industry, government and funding bodies to address how the North West can create the conditions which allow science to scale, converting research excellence into regional economic growth.

Insights

The roundtable focused on strategies to enhance innovation, investment, and growth in the Northwest's science and technology sector.

Key points included the need for collaboration, flexible and scalable facilities, and effective storytelling to attract investment. Metrics highlighted the disparity in investment, with 57% of UK life sciences spinouts originating outside the Golden Triangle (Oxford, Cambridge, London) but receiving only 28% of overall investment.

The discussion emphasised the importance of incubation, community events, and amenities like coffee shops and on-site nurseries to foster collaboration and retain talent.

The discussion also focused on the challenges and opportunities in the UK's venture capital (VC) market, particularly for female-led businesses, which receive only 6% of VC investment.

The meeting highlighted the need for better public awareness of funding opportunities, including government grants and regional funds.

The importance of talent retention and the challenges in recruiting business development managers were also discussed. The meeting concluded with a call for increased collaboration, networking, and government support to enhance the region's attractiveness for investment and talent.

Action Items

- **Explore innovative funding models like equity-based incubation spaces and supporting a clear value proposition for occupiers who need to see return on their investment in property costs.**
- **Advocate for improvements to the visa system to help retain international talent.**
- **Engage with pension funds and other institutional investors to unlock more funding for early-stage and scale-up companies in the region.**
- **Develop programmes to upskill technical talent in business development and commercial skills.**
- **Improve visibility and promotion of job opportunities and career paths in the region, especially targeting students and young professionals.**
- **Increase engagement with schools and colleges to inspire and prepare the next generation of STEM talent.**

BondBryan: Fairhursts

Roundtable Summary

Key Takeaways

Summary: Key Themes

1. **Cost Pressures and Ecosystem Participation**
   A strong theme was the tension between companies' desire to be part of thriving innovation ecosystems and the high costs of being in innovation clusters, forcing relocations that weaken collaboration. Occupiers need a clear value case for higher costs, balancing access to talent and facilities against financial sustainability.

2. **Macroeconomic and Geopolitical Headwinds**
   Global uncertainty and shifting investment patterns—such as AstraZeneca's move overseas—underscore the UK's fragile position while regulatory and banking hurdles, particularly for firms from "grey list" countries, continue to deter otherwise willing international investors.

3. **Talent Attraction and Retention**
   Recruitment challenges persist; authentic positioning and communication directly affect talent outcomes. The North West has strong talent, but better connection between skills and roles is needed.

4. **Scientific Growth Areas**
   Nuclear medicine for oncology or diagnostics presents growth potential for Manchester, pending further strategic development and confirmation.

5. **Culture, Infrastructure, and Place**
   Long-term success depends on integrated planning—linking workspace, affordable housing, good transport links and vibrant communities are key for people to live near their jobs and stay engaged with the ecosystem.

Key Quotes

"I think we've got a massive story on Manchester, and the confidence to build on it, With such an unstable global political climate, it will be an uphill challenge, but given what has been said today, there's lots of positivity... and a big Manchester story that will go into the place marketing and the storytelling that goes into bringing forward and driving forward this innovation investment."
Michelle McHugh, Rochdale Development Agency

"I think it falls on everyone to ensure we have a value proposition in terms of collaboration, skills, location, specification of the space we are within and the public realm to create the right ecosystem for success. From a real estate perspective that falls on the developers, both to provide the physical spaces around coffee shops and event spaces to enable those collaborative interactions as well as some of the software elements that already exist around networking and events and connecting people."
Jamie Bottomley , Track Real Estate

"I just think there's a wealth of talent, genuinely in the Northwest, and I think there's some great opportunities...but there is a lack of visibility which we need to address."
Justin Carpenter, Bailey Fisher

"We can, and should, sometimes embrace failure. While it's probably going to be quite painful for everyone around this table and others, but actually it's well established in the US that failure might actually be a sign of a maturing or more mature ecosystem, if we can embrace it."
Jamie Bottomley , Track Real Estate

BondBryan:
Fairhursts

Roundtable Summary

Participants

Hosts:

Laura Sherliker
BondBryan: Fairhursts

Jon Rigby
BondBryan: Fairhursts

Alex Murphy
Mills & Reeve

Jamie Bottomley
Track Real Estate

Guests:

Andrea Winders
Midas

Siobhan Gall
HSBC

Dace Dimza Jones
Department of Business & Trade

John Leake
Langree/Sci-Tech Daresbury

Helen Ratcliffe
Mix Manchester

Michelle McHugh
Rochdale Development Agency

Kirk Malone
BRITEST

Ian Martin
IFirst Graphene

Justin Carpenter
Bailey Fisher

Andy Roberts
Triple Chasm

Hosts

BondBryan:
Fairhursts

BondBryan:Fairhursts is a specialist division of the Bond Bryan group, dedicated to delivering high-performance environments for science, research, and innovation. With a UK-wide presence and extensive experience across laboratories, innovation campuses, and advanced manufacturing facilities, we bring over 125 years of architectural expertise and more than £700M of delivered science projects to our clients. From laboratories to research hubs, BondBryan:Fairhursts consistently delivers environments that meet the highest technical standards while enabling real-world breakthroughs.

MILLS & REEVE

Mills & Reeve is a leading UK law firm with a strong focus on the life sciences, biotechnology, and technology sectors. Beyond legal services, Mills & Reeve supports the development of science parks and innovation campuses, applying its expertise to facilitate growth within research-led environments and strengthen the UK's global position in life sciences.

TRACK REAL ESTATE

Track Real Estate is a specialist property consultancy dedicated to laboratory and life science real estate across the UK. We assist biotech, R&D, and innovation occupiers in finding and acquiring lab-enabled spaces, while advising investors on developing and managing science-ready assets.

For further information please contact:

Laura Sherliker
Director, BondBryan:Fairhursts
las@fairhursts.com