

Last week it was my pleasure to host a special event to mark the completion of external work on Glass Futures here in St Helens.

The council will now take ownership of the site and hand it to Glass Futures ready to start the internal work of fitting out the furnace, research, laboratory and office space.

As I wrote last week, Glass Futures chose our town not just because of the strong case we made but because of St Helens' history and clear potential. Their ambition and ours is equally high. It would be easy for them to just focus on revolutionising the global glass industry – no small feat! But they're determined to go above and beyond.

They are fully behind our town centre regeneration plans, and as a global centre of excellence they'll be attracting visitors and workers from all over the world to the revamped town centre's hotels, shops and leisure facilities.

They're also supporting our work to create local job and training opportunities and boost local supply chains.

One of the highlights for me of last week's event was meeting Max, a pupil at Sutton Academy who enjoyed two weeks work experience with Glass Futures. Whether or not he chooses a career in science or glass, he's had his eyes opened to opportunities that simply didn't exist before.

Max is one of many who have already directly benefited from the project, from the apprentices who have already been taken on and those who have already been employed, to the local companies such as Vinyline and Huyton Asphalt (based in Merton Bank) who helped complete the signage and external works.

As well as the Glass Futures project, local apprentices have been recruited on major projects such as the Gamble restoration and school rebuilding schemes. And through our new social value and Inclusive Growth policies we'll make sure the local economy benefits as much possible from all the regeneration we're delivering – just like they have from Glass Futures.

In just the past year, 18 schools and nearly 800 primary school pupils have received special talks and information about scientific and technical careers supported through our Parkside Joint Venture and partners. It's just the start.

Let's raise aspiration, achievement, and talk St Helens up. The future is bright if we work together for it.

Best wishes to all Star readers.