

WMCA

Digital update

February 2018

Contents

This document provides an update on the work of our Digital Board, since its formation was approved by the WMCA Board in September 2017.

The structure of this document is as follows:

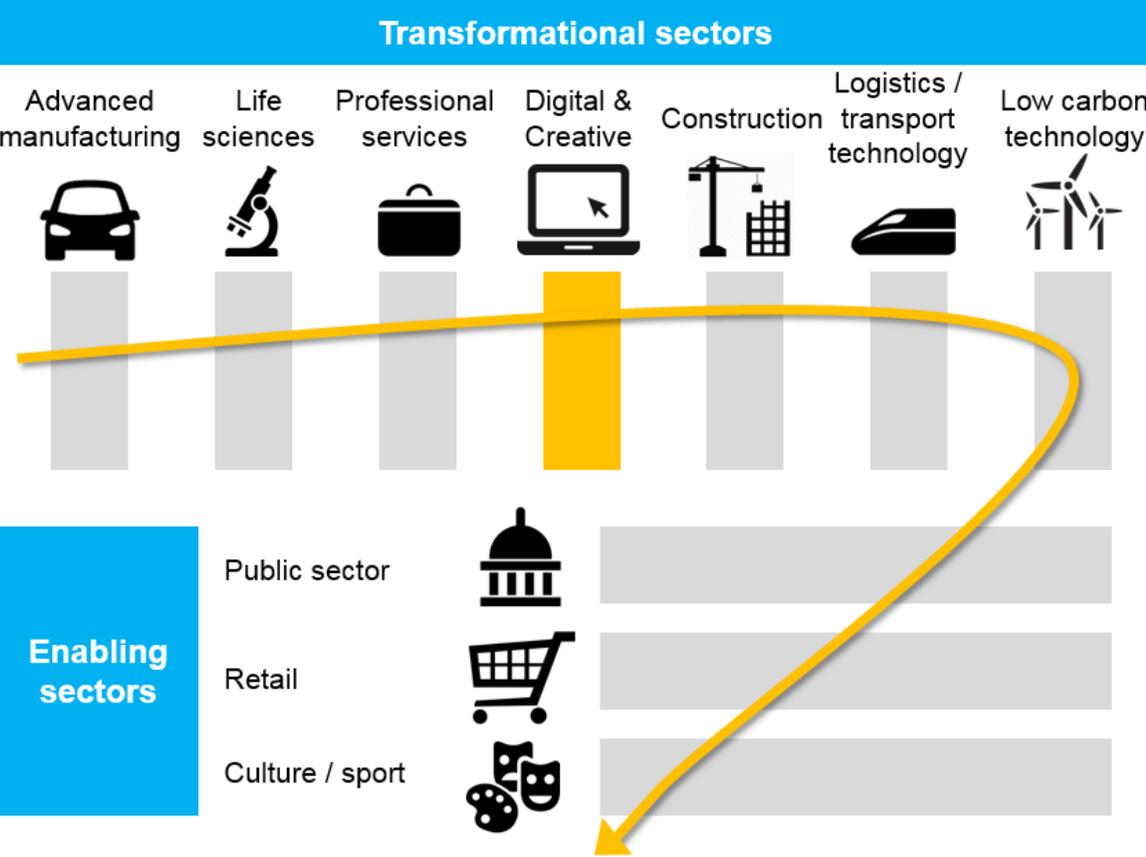
- Regional context
- Recap on rationale for setting up the Digital Board, its aims and objectives
- Details of meetings held, membership and attendance
- Current focus areas
- Next steps

Regional context

The WMCA’s Strategic Economic Plan is grounded in the overriding strategy of rapid acceleration in growth, employment and productivity through targeted actions in key sectors, enhanced innovation incubation and skills development alongside public sector reform.

Digital is a vital part of the SEP, cutting across all industries in the region (as well as being an important sector in its own right), with technological improvements transforming our industries. With innovation, technological development, and therefore a digital focus, all being a core part of improving growth and productivity, it is essential that we have a clear digital strategy and act now to embrace the change that digital is bringing.

The Digital Board was formed following WMCA Board approval in September 2017. The remit of this board was develop a region-wide digital strategy and bring together the good work that was already being undertaken across the region, both within local government and more broadly within the regional tech ecosystem in the West Midlands.



Regional digital priorities

Recap

- Our Vision is - not to become the new Silicon Valley or to compete on the same scale as London, but to be a tech hub in our specialist sectors, with the aim being to create more and better digital jobs and to ensure that we make the most of how digital technology is transforming our region and our sectors.
- Underlying success factors make the West Midlands a high-potential technology growth region – e.g. young/diverse population, strong anchor universities, cost of living and quality of life, an entrepreneurial culture, and good connectivity.
- However, we also face challenges – in particular –
 - Skills – better linkage between employment and education needed
 - Role models – to guide and support our start-ups and SMEs
 - Infrastructure – improved connectivity and speeds for business and residents
 - Profile – driving awareness of our ambitions and successes
 - Workspace – creating vibrant co-working spaces to help develop our tech eco-system
 - Financing – access to funding and financing for all, not just established businesses

The Digital Board's focus reflects these challenges:



Development of digital skills initiatives



Focus on infrastructure – fibre connectivity, mobile communication, 5G and next generation technology



Digital government and data – including our 'UrbanTech' focus



Development of regional tech eco-system, including mentoring, start-up support, co-working spaces



Marketing/communications – putting the West Midlands on the map

The Board's activities and focus are not designed to duplicate work already ongoing within local authorities, and ongoing collaboration with local authority IT leads will be enhanced to ensure this is the case.

The Digital Board

Membership

The following have volunteered to be part of the Digital Board. Without the commitment of these people, progress on our digital ambitions would be significantly constrained:

- David Maclean (chair) – CEO, Packt Publishing
- Tim Kay – Digital lead, KPMG Birmingham
- Roy Meredith, Digital Business Development Director, WMGC
- Sarah Windrum – CWLEP and CEO Emerald Communications
- Raj Mack – Head of Digital Birmingham
- Chris Meah – CEO, School of Code
- Tracy Westall – Director, Tech UK, and NED, Innovation Birmingham
- Faye Pressly – COO, Vanti
- Hanadi Jabado – Centre of Entrepreneurship, Cambridge Judge Business School
- Brendan O'Reilly – CTO, Telefonica
- Joel Blake – GBSLEP lead for SME growth
- Jon Wrennall – CTO, Advanced
- Julian Turner – CEO, Westfield Technology Group

The board has agreed the importance of consistent engagement and co-design with local authority and public service partners as it shifts from early stage set-up to delivery.

Meetings

Meetings have been held on the following dates, including outline content of each meeting. Meetings take place on a monthly basis:

Date	Content
11/10/2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Context – regional digital vision – and Board objectives• Quick wins for early focus• Broader digital programme and focus areas• Roles and responsibilities
15/11/2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• UrbanChallenge update• Funding/Devo II update• Update on key focus areas• New opportunities
13/12/2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion of CDO role• 5G programme• Implications of budget/Devo II announcements on Digital Board operations• Focus on funding and financing of activities• Brief updates on other areas
24/01/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Digital stakeholder mapping• Development of taskforce approach to delivery of key objectives• Digital infrastructure programme• Digital Skills scene-setting• Funding focus

The Digital Board – taskforce approach

Overview

- Whilst funding available to support digital initiatives and resource a digital team is limited, the Digital Board has developed a ‘taskforce’ approach to implementing its strategy. Each taskforce comprises a small number of members of the Digital Board, with external expertise brought into the taskforce from other experts in the region (again either private sector or local authority/public sector).
- Taskforces in place are as follows – note that this focus is likely to evolve over time, such that additional taskforces may be set up to focus on specific initiatives:
 - **Skills** – working closely with WMCA Productivity and Skills team, to assess skills gap in the region and consider better ways of linking digital education with employment
 - **Infrastructure** – assess opportunities to improve roll-out of digital infrastructure across the regions – will need ongoing engagement with local authority teams.
 - **Stakeholder engagement** – developing more regular links with regional stakeholders, such as corporates, banks, tech companies, universities and other groups, to improve awareness of digital activity and ambitions across the region.
 - **Data and smart cities** – assessing ways to improve visibility of available to data for use in the region, exploring open data and smart city initiatives, collaboration with existing data initiatives in the region.
 - **Eco-system** – exploring ways to build a greater tech presence in the region, in particular improving access to finance for growing businesses, developing broader mentor/angel networks, ways to increase the supply of co-working spaces for start-ups, etc
- A focus on seeking funding opportunities exists across all of these taskforces, and opportunities for deeper collaboration with local authority and system partners – including non-constituent areas, within which a significant digital economy already exists (e.g. Leamington’s ‘Silicon Spa’ cluster)

Recent activities in Digital in the region (1)

Digital infrastructure

- Ongoing engagement with infrastructure providers, to explore programmes of faster rollout of infrastructure – e.g. with:
 - Vodafone/City Fibre
 - Openreach
 - Virgin Media
 - BT

Our ambition is to be seen as a leader in facilitating efficient roll-out of digital infrastructure in the region
- 5G testbed/trials application submitted by one consortium in the region. One further consortium did not progress to a bid. We understand the bid submitted was unsuccessful.
- Ongoing engagement with tech cos and regional corporates, to develop 5G use cases
- Local Full Fibre Network bids have been progressed by LAs in the region – two bids were submitted in January 2018, with more expected in later phases of this programme.
- We have been engaging with relevant bodies – TechUK, DCMS Barrier Busting Task Force, etc – to speed fibre roll-out in the region.
- Engagement with Space Catapult, to assess potential for alternative connectivity solutions

- Working with alternative providers such as CityFibre, Warwicknet and others to encourage new open access wholesale networks – and targeting areas that BT/Openreach say are not viable (e.g. business parks)

Digital skills

- Completed first cohort of School of Code pilot (18 grads) Jan 18, now in work placement phase. Intention to take learning from pilot and scale this up.
- Other digital programmes in the region taking shape – e.g. Solihull College (FE college) commenced a pilot programme with a cohort of 10, now expanding next phase to increasing capacity and rolling out to other FE colleges
- Initiating program with Tech Nation, LinkedIn, others to create local job market analytics for integrated talent demand mapping. Next phase to build employer panels for insight to create local Tech Skills partnerships.
- Birmingham Ormiston Academy (BOA), an independent state-funded 14-19 academy specialising in Creative, Digital and Performing Arts, is to launch “BOA Digital” an 11-18 academy specialising in digital technology. Targeted to open in September 2018 and will be located in central Birmingham, close to Aston University, Birmingham City University (BCU) and their new STEAMhouse project

Recent activities in Digital in the region (2)

Digital skills (cont.)

- BBC Shared Data Unit - brings together experienced BBC data journalists alongside reporters seconded from the wider local news industry. Started in Nov-17, aimed at developing data journalism expertise in regional news market.

Digital government and data

- Launched the UrbanChallenge in November 2017, supported by Sajid Javid. 250 attendees attended the launch conference “UrbanSummit”.
- The Programme is ongoing, with the aim being to offer start-ups the opportunity to develop digital solutions across four areas in the region – wellbeing, skills, housing and ‘digital citizenship’
- First phase challenge ongoing, with approximately 125 applications received – pilot programmes for the winners of each challenge are anticipated to take place April-June 2018, involving close collaboration with WMCA teams, supported by Public and AWS.
- Engagement with West Midlands Open Data Forum, to look at developing open data initiatives.
- Specific taskforce in place, focused on developing approach to data
- Work in connection with Office of Data Analytics progressing, as per budget funding.

Development of our regional tech-ecosystem

- BBC Three move is well underway –
 - Trainees and apprentices, who are already at work in The Mailbox, are creating content for BBC Three.
 - BBC Three has posted a list of Birmingham-based opportunities in production, journalism and digital for emerging and established talent - more roles to follow in the coming months. Senior appointment due shortly.
 - Also working on infrastructure changes to create edit suites, a studio and team space for BBC Three.
- Channel 4 relocation – decision awaited
- Initial vision and stakeholder meetings for sector innovation around sports, e-sports, and linkage to CWG22
- Programme of engagement with key regional (and national) stakeholders in place, to look at greater collaboration with those groups

Marketing/communication

- Marketing and comms plan in place for WMCA Digital, in conjunction with WM Growth Company, to drive greater visibility of region’s tech focus
- Ramp-up of events in late 2017:
 - Pushing for Websummit to relocate from 2019 onwards – attended at WS 2017, and follow-up meeting in February 2018.
 - TechNation skills event in region, to launch skills report – Dec-17
 - UrbanSummit conference Nov-17

Government engagement

We have continued to engage with DCMS to discuss our regional Digital ambitions. Specific areas where we are looking for further support include the following:

- **Support in developing our digital skills focus** – the digital skills shortage is a key area of focus, and we are working with education providers and other stakeholders to investigate ways in which we can scale existing propositions in the region. Key focus areas include:
 - Initiating our digital skills institute, with initial focus on assessing digital skills demand, gaps and needs in the region – i.e. mapping the regional supply and demand of digital skills in detail
 - Supporting scale-up of existing digital skills and apprenticeship programmes
 - Support development of a West Midlands Apprenticeship Portal, to give better access and visibility of digital learning opportunities, and improved matching of candidates and courses.
- **Geospatial data** – engagement with the Geospatial Commission that was launched in November 2017, to look at how the West Midlands can engage and act as a pilot for usage of geospatial data. We are excited at the opportunity this may present and are keen to engage to see how we can support pilot programmes in the region.
- **GovTech Fund** – prior to budget we had developed our plans for our own ‘UrbanChallenge’ to look at how GovTech could benefit the region. This programme is underway. Our aim is to make this sustainable, and linking into this challenge fund is a core part of our focus to sustain this effort.
- **WMCA investment fund** – a £2.5 billion investment fund was announced in the November 2017 budget, to support growing tech businesses in the UK. We believe there is a significant opportunity in the West Midlands that could be unlocked with this fund and are actively looking at how to unlock this fund and maximize the potential of regional tech businesses in the West Midlands.
- **Data and regulation** – these are key focus areas for us going forward. Ongoing communication with BEIS in this area is important

Next steps

The work of the Digital Board remains in its early stages. Going forward, our immediate focus areas are in the following areas:

- **Engaging with LA Heads of IT:** we recognize the need to ensure close collaboration across the region. We are looking to join the Heads of IT's next group meeting in March 2017, to discuss our ambitions, the respective LA's digital agendas, and the ways in which we can collaborate and support each other going forward.
- **Focus on government funding opportunities:** with no direct Digital funding made available to the WMCA in the Budget/Devo II, we are continuing a focus on developing bids for central funding pots. Upcoming bids include the next phase of Local Full Fibre Network programmes, Phase 2 of DCMS's 5G testbeds and trials programme, as well ongoing InnovateUK funding programmes.
- **Capacity building:** we have commenced recruitment of a Chief Digital Officer for the WMCA, which will be funded from the capacity monies announced in the November 2017 budget. This post is not expected to be filled until mid 2018. Prior to that, digital capability is expected to be driven by the Digital Board and secondees into the WMCA from regional stakeholders, who we are actively targeting for support. The 'accountable employee' (and primary engagement lead) for Digital will become the CDO, once appointed.
- **Investigate potential funding opportunities from WMCA Investment Programme:** subject to the usual WMCA approval processes we will shortlist specific programmes and seek funding to develop progress in these areas – in particular with regard to digital skills and data.
- **Progression of UrbanChallenge:** pilot programmes due to take place in April-June 2018, with active support from regional public sector teams.
- **Embed taskforce approach to our work,** in particular:
 - Skills – assess actual gaps in provision, prior to developing solutions to address
 - Infrastructure – LFFN and 5G programmes, and engagement across LAs and infrastructure providers to help drive ultrafast connectivity around the region
 - Data – consider approach assessing data availability in the region, open data initiatives, and connecting with existing data and smart cities work in the region
 - Stakeholder mapping – implement programme to maintain closer links with key regional stakeholders, including corporates, adviser network, LA teams, DCMS teams and others
 - Marketing/comms – implement proposed plan to develop greater awareness of regional capabilities

