



West Midlands
Combined Authority



West Midlands
Levelling Up
Growth Prospectus



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Forewords

At the heart of the country, the West Midlands has long been the nation's economic engine, driving progress and growth. From the birthplace of the industrial revolution to the advances in technology that we see today, our region plays a pivotal role in the economy of the United Kingdom.

Before the pandemic we had the fastest growth outside London. However, with our high concentration of manufacturing and exporting businesses, the West Midlands was badly hit by Covid and will now be adversely impacted by the rising cost-of-living.

This "Levelling Up Growth Prospectus" sets out the tools we need to tackle the challenges of today, while forging a region fit for the future.

Complementing our Plan for Growth, this document sets out our blueprint for levelling up; we need to level up our region, drive forward the new green industrial revolution and leverage private sector investment to get the economy firing on all cylinders again.

Mayoral Combined Authorities are crucial for delivering short-term solutions to ease the cost-of-living, whilst simultaneously tackling the climate emergency and delivering levelling up. We know that levelling up needs strong local leadership and greater devolution to help address these challenges.

But we aren't alone in this endeavour. The West Midlands Combined Authority, its member local authorities and our partners across the region have shown how effective we can be in shaping the drivers of economic growth, together. Working collaboratively, we have grown an award-winning public transport system, built thousands of homes and unlocked brownfield sites for development, risen to the net zero challenge with pioneering retrofit schemes, and crucially turned around a failing skills system.

But to build on this progress, we need the Government to give us the tools to go further, faster.

The West Midlands has the people, the business, the connections, and the will to supercharge green and inclusive economic growth. With the right tools, we can deliver solutions to some of the region's toughest challenges.

As the Prime Minister said:

“

When the West Midlands succeeds, the country succeeds.

”



Andy Street
Mayor of the West Midlands

This West Midlands Levelling Up Growth Prospectus sets out how we are working as a region to tackle the various challenges the region faces and to secure the autonomy we need from government to drive long term inclusive growth, across the West Midlands.

At the time of writing, the country is facing a cost-of-living crisis, driven by high inflation and soaring energy prices. The direct and indirect consequences of this crisis on the region's residents and businesses could be huge.

For instance, there are an estimated 235,512 fuel poor homes in the West Midlands — the highest rate of fuel poverty in any English region. The people in these homes will be extremely exposed.

But with strong local leadership and a solid track record of delivery, the West Midlands can offer the solution.

Our pioneering retrofit schemes are driving down energy consumption while ensuring our residents and businesses are warm, safe and comfortable. We are currently running two government-funded retrofit projects targeting nearly 1,000 low-income households. With the right funding and resources, we can turbocharge these schemes and bring more people out of fuel poverty.

But this isn't just about tackling the challenges of today - it's also about our shared hopes for the future.

We want the West Midlands to be the home of a new, green industrial revolution – and this document calls upon government to match our ambitions with their support, with proposals around local area energy planning to help reduce energy bills and support for innovation in areas such as battery technology.

We also need more flexible funding to build affordable, zero carbon homes and unlock stalled investment through new Levelling Up Investment Zones.

We need to protect and expand the bus and tram routes residents and businesses rely on, with more control over bus operator funding and investment in the expansion of the Metro network. We need new ways to encourage people onto public transport through mobility credit schemes, new e-mobility powers, and a dynamic role in Great British Railways.

We need further investment to allow us to capitalise on major events such as the Commonwealth Games, to both promote 'pride in place' and attract further foreign direct investment.

The Government must lay solid foundations for real recovery with sustainable and fair funding for local government. Through "double devolution" we can unlock a whole system approach to level up the nation. Herein lies the blueprint for how to do that.



Cllr Brigid Jones
Deputy Leader of Birmingham City Council
and WMCA Portfolio Lead for Levelling Up



A Plan To Level Up

The West Midlands has so much to shout about. We have a young, diverse population, dynamic towns and cities, thriving, innovative businesses, and our culture and natural beauty — which are too often just well-kept secrets.

We have a rich industrial history and heritage, and very recently we were the fastest-growing region outside London in the decade to 2019, breaking through the £100 billion economic output mark.

We have captured the eyes of the world with a colourful Commonwealth Games and Coventry as 'City of Culture'; the future is bright too — new businesses locating in the region and HS2 continues to take shape month by month.

But not everyone is sharing equally in this success. And these successes are hard won in a country where too much is controlled from London.

In the West Midlands, levelling up is about giving everyone in the region the chance to flourish by freeing our regional leaders to be more effective and to be more effective and more responsive to the needs and aspirations of all our communities.

The past two years have been tough — the Covid pandemic, new trade frictions and supply chain challenges and global economic fluctuations have resulted in consequences for every region. The effects of climate change and environmental breakdown are having a growing impact and influence on public policy.

Photo supplied by Getty Images for Birmingham 2022

Additionally, global affairs are causing significant economic instability, which is having a profound effect on energy security, inflation, and the wider cost of living. Despite all the progress, some of the inequalities that exist within and between places, communities and regions are now growing ever wider.

Levelling up must start with a thriving economy which creates opportunity for all.

The West Midlands *Plan for Growth* sets a path to returning to that growth trajectory and spreading opportunity and jobs across the region. It will require government to increase our ability to work more effectively with business and unlock private investment as other mayors can across the world.

The West Midlands Combined Authority, and its member authorities across the region, have shown how effective they can be in shaping the drivers of economic growth. We have grown an award-winning public transport system, built thousands of homes and unlocked brownfield sites for development, risen to the net zero challenge with pioneering retrofit schemes, and crucially turned around a failing skills system.

Since the original Devolution Deal with the WMCA in 2015, over £4.7 billion of new funding has been brought into the region as the mayor and member authorities have worked together to unlock growth.

So, to level up we must double-down on our successes. First, we must go further and faster on those drivers of growth that have been devolved to us already. We need greater control over post-16 technical and vocational training and opportunities to co-commission employment support to better address local needs.

We need more flexible funding to build more affordable, zero carbon homes and unlock stalled investment through new Levelling Up Investment Zones.

And we need new ways to encourage people onto public transport through mobility credit schemes, new e-mobility powers, and a dynamic role in Great British Railways.

In all these areas, we need simplified funding streams with fewer strings and competitions. We could really unlock private investment, local supply chains and training programmes in opportunities like domestic retrofit, if government could guarantee a more flexible flow of public funds rather than stop-start competitions for limited pots.

Next, to solve the productivity challenge in the West Midlands and create more, higher-paid local jobs, we need new powers to reboot economic growth. We need a new model of consolidated, co-commissioned business support and, building on our Innovation Accelerator, we need to secure our fair share of public R&D investment, working more closely with UKRI to unlock opportunities in health tech and burgeoning low carbon technologies.

Our Global West Midlands programme requires a new relationship and support from the Office for Investment. Our 16,000 energy intensive businesses and their supply chains require a unique approach to addressing escalating energy costs and making the low carbon transition.

To create more, higher-paid local jobs, we need new powers to reboot economic growth.

To level up we must address our communities' concerns about public services and restore pride in place. Health and wealth are two sides of the same coin — working with our health system partners, we have plans to make much better use of data and digital innovation in tackling the healthcare backlog, and find new ways to tackle health inequalities.

We want to go further on homelessness prevention and addressing our high levels of digital exclusion and, working with the Police and Crime Commissioner, there is more we can do to improve community safety and tackle youth crime.

We have plans to improve access to the arts and culture in places that are underserved, ensuring that we build on the success of the Commonwealth Games and Coventry City of Culture to create a lasting legacy. We hope this will narrow the differences in participation rates in culture, sport and heritage within the region.

As the national leader in 5G mobile coverage, we will also bring forward a West Midlands Smart City Region programme to use our digital infrastructure to improve access to healthcare and unlock smarter transport and energy systems.



They will also allow the public to make a clear judgement on the collective impact of our regional activity against key challenges, hold us to account and make comparisons. Levelling up is a collaborative effort. It rests on the hard work of our businesses, communities, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals and many, many others. And none of this will be possible without strong local leadership and accountability.

As part of our devolution process, we have agreed clear principles with our local authority members. Where possible, new powers and funding will be 'double devolved' — making sure it's truly local, closer to people and places who need it, with no powers sucked upwards.

Our plans for levelling up must be aligned to local plans and strategies. We're working hard to make sure we seize opportunities to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts — making the links between innovation and transport, housing and net zero, digital and energy infrastructure and skills, for example.

We are committed to delivering our proposals in a way that enables all of our communities to unlock their potential - by actively addressing inequality and the barriers to success experienced by young, old, disabled and minority ethnic people.

To monitor our progress on our efforts to level up, we've developed a new West Midlands Outcomes Framework. This has a set of key metrics by which we can measure whether our collective efforts are having impact.

They will also allow the public to make a clear judgement on the performance of our regional leaders and make comparisons from region to region. Our mayor and many of our other local leaders are ultimately judged at the ballot box, but as we take on new powers and responsibilities, we will enhance our accountability too.

The government's Levelling Up White Paper made one thing very clear: this is a broad, deep and long-term programme. The West Midlands Levelling Up Growth Prospectus details proposals for a Trailblazer Devolution Deal that we wish to secure in the coming year. This new devolution deal must come with the appropriate resources. The White Paper recognises the need for simplified funding, monitoring and evaluation across key programmes of work, but the WMCA needs a new long-term fiscal settlement to support its levelling up agenda. As the White Paper says itself:

“

System change is not about a string of shiny, but ultimately short-lived, new policy initiatives. It is about root and branch reform of government and governance of the UK. It is about putting power in local hands, armed with the right information, and embedded in strong civic institutions.

Levelling Up White Paper

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The West Midlands is stepping up to this challenge and this Levelling Up Growth Prospectus provides a routemap to guide our path. But if we are to turn the tide on regional inequality and unlock unprecedented investment in our region to steer us out of such troubled times, then it will take all of us — not least national government — to forge new relationships that put communities at the centre of the fairer, greener, better-connected region that will benefit us all.

Special Feature: Levelling Up Missions and the West Midlands Outcomes Framework

Levelling Up Missions

The government's Levelling Up White Paper includes 12 'Levelling Up Missions', which are the medium-term ambitions of the government for all parts of the UK. They are designed to focus energy and action across central and local government, as well as in businesses and civil society.

The Government's 12 Missions



The 12 missions provide consistency and clarity about how the levelling up agenda is progressing. The government is taking on a statutory responsibility to provide an annual report on its progress in addressing them, but they're also seeking to develop a 'framework' to hold mayoral combined authorities to account.

The Importance of Data

To measure progress on levelling up – nationally, regionally, or locally – it's vital that we have the right data. However, there is a lack of quality and accessibility of local data, and there are big gaps in what data is gathered and how it's shared.

The government has committed to a new subnational data strategy, and a special Spatial Data Unit to work with local and regional authorities to improve things through an online platform.

In the West Midlands we're ready to go further and faster. We'll bring together the WMCA, local authorities and other public agencies, universities and our growing tech sector to build a better regional data ecosystem.

Going further and faster with data

- Give WMCA the same status on data access rights as a top tier authority;
- Develop a HM Government – WMCA Data Agreement with commitments to data access and standards for data sharing and its use;
- Build professional development pathways to empower local and regional data users;
- To consider locating the new independent local data body in the West Midlands;
- Greater clarity over national standards on data ethics and information assurance to allow the West Midlands to become a leader in this field.

The West Midlands Outcome Framework (WMOF)

Each year the 'State of The Region' report gives us a snapshot of economic progress in the West Midlands. This includes indicators which act as an evidence base to support programme development. The WMCA has also developed an Inclusive Growth Framework which has a range of quantitative and qualitative metrics which tell us how well the benefits of economic growth are being shared.

We're working with government to combine our existing approaches into a new West Midlands Outcomes Framework (WMOF).

The WMOF contains 24 headline indicators across 8 different themes, and these will provide the basis for regional partners to assess their progress in terms of levelling up. Many of them link to the government's Levelling Up Missions, but taken together they add local colour and precision to the government's approach.

The draft WMOF is set out as an annex at the end of this report.

Accountability

The WMOF will give all regional partners the metrics to judge their efforts by, but it will also provide an important means by which the mayor and local authority leaders can be held to account.

There are already a range of ways in which the mayor and combined authority are held accountable — through performance reporting, especially to funders, through its various thematic boards and scrutiny panels, through Mayor's Question Time and other public forums, and ultimately, by the general public at the ballot box.





Section A: Going Further & Faster

Going Further & Faster

Our first step towards levelling up the West Midlands is to go further and faster on those drivers of growth that have already been devolved to us.

Our first set of Trailblazer Devolution Deal proposals are focused on the themes of:

1. **Housing & Regeneration**
2. **Transport**
3. **Skills**
4. **Retrofit**

These are areas where we've already made good progress in making a positive impact on the residents and businesses of the West Midlands.

To go further, we need greater control over post-16 technical and vocational training, and opportunities to co-commission employment support to better address local needs.

We need more flexible funding to build affordable, zero carbon homes and unlock stalled investment through new Levelling Up Investment Zones.

And we need new ways to encourage people onto public transport through mobility credit schemes, new e-mobility powers, and a dynamic role in the new Great British Railways.

Too many of our communities face unequal access to these fundamental aspects of life owing to a range of circumstances such as racial heritage, economic activity or disabilities. Improving inclusion and equality of access runs as a thread throughout these proposals.

Together, these themes represent the enablers of our local economy and communities. The changes proposed within them are critical to ensuring that all residents and businesses across the West Midlands can prosper and connect.

Housing & Regeneration



The Challenge

The current housing system means we can't invest in homes, commercial property and high streets, heritage assets, parks and public spaces, and vital infrastructure in the way we need to, if we're to make a difference to local standards of living.

One of the main challenges is building more affordable homes, which would help to transform the lives of many of our residents.

We want to continue to be a leading region for net additions to housing stock, alongside wanting residents and businesses to thrive, so our focus must be wider than on housing numbers alone.

We face complex barriers in the current funding system; a more flexible, place-based approach for the West Midlands is key to tackling these.

The Prize

Our vision for change requires capacity and flexibility, underpinned by long-term certainty of funding. This will allow us to invest in a way that that is not only measured by housing targets.

It will improve living standards, transport connectivity, and wellbeing, connecting people to thriving local economies and places that are a pleasure to be in. This will provide further confidence to potential investors and show the West Midlands as an excellent investment prospect.

We want to invest locally in affordable housing, infrastructure and local places that will help the West Midlands communities that need it the most.

Progress So Far...

We already have a pioneering brownfield regeneration programme, including sites that have historically been considered too complex and difficult to deliver. This demonstrates the strength and aptitude for regeneration in the West Midlands, and includes:

- 1 Innovating on key policy areas (e.g. new affordable housing definition)
- 2 Collaborating across 17 Local Council Areas
- 3 Working with business and investors
- 4 Deploying Government funding at serious pace and scale
- 5 Showcasing our potential to go even further

Importantly, it's also demonstrated our credibility and commitment to Whitehall that this a region at the forefront of brownfield regeneration — our proposals only seek to build upon the strong progress we have made so far.

We've supported local areas to drive growth and unlock their wider economic, social and wellbeing potential.



Levelling Up Mission

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Renters will have a secure path to ownership with the number of first-time buyers increasing in all areas; and the government's ambition is for the number of non-decent rented homes to have fallen by 50%, with the biggest improvements in the lowest performing areas.

Our Proposal

A Flexible & Innovative Funding Regime

A pioneering Single Regeneration Fund/ Funding Package to maximise opportunities and investment in supporting brownfield first and town centre regeneration through placemaking, regeneration, housing supply and infrastructure delivery - de-risking stalled and challenging housing, mixed-use and commercial development sites across the region.

Affordable Housing

Building on our landmark affordable housing definition and minimum affordable housing target, our ask is to secure a bold funding package to work in partnership with local and national partners to support affordable housing delivery.

Levelling Up Investment Zones

Government support and endorsement for local designation of dedicated Investment Zones that build on the 2022 Investment Prospectus – to maximise coordinated public and private sector investment, support local accountability, and achieve transformational 'levelling up' by making available a suite of regeneration, fiscal and financial mechanisms and flexibilities.

Land Reform Programme

Government support, backing and endorsement for WMCA delivering the Housing & Land Delivery Board's Public Land Charter, including a bold approach to tackling fragmented land ownership; the region by default having a major say over any HMG land disposals in our region; and a regional testbed for a new approach to best value and more effective regime for disposal of public land sites.

What We Hope to Achieve

These proposals will unlock placemaking, regeneration and investment through high quality commercial, mixed-use and housing schemes.

This will result in more affordable, better designed and more efficient homes, integrated into inclusive and well-connected development and regeneration schemes. This in turn will benefit the region, by:

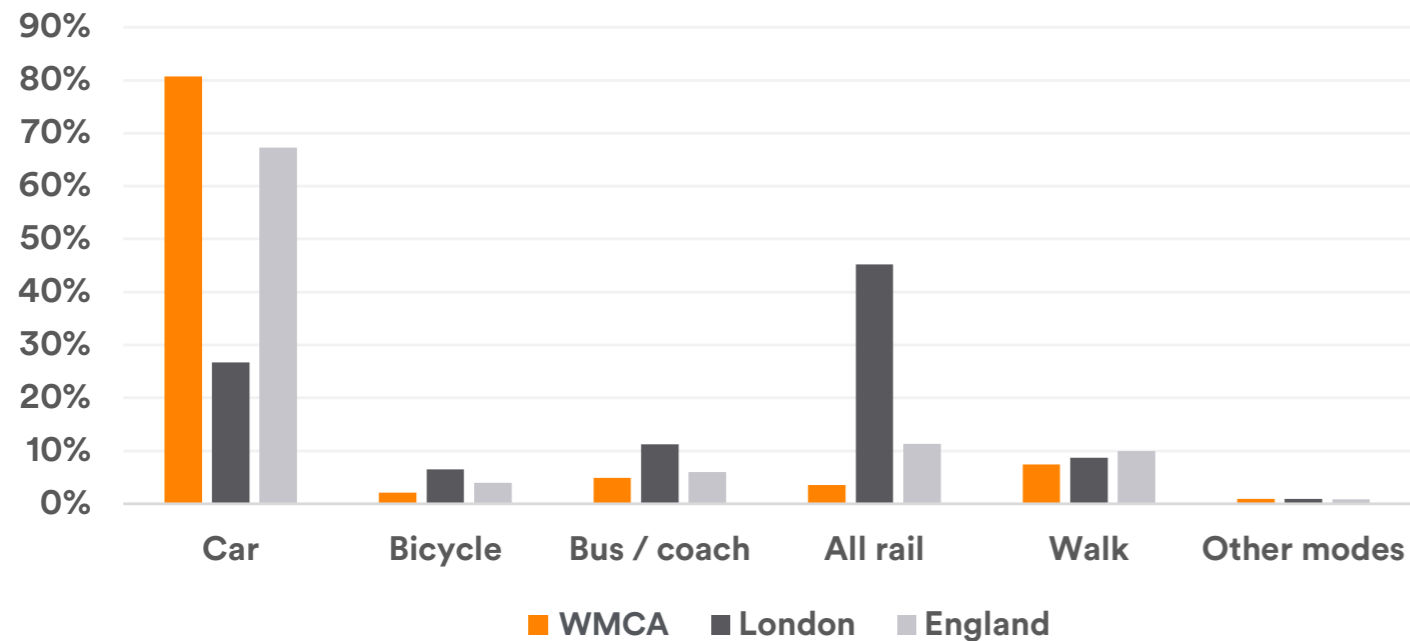
- Boosting productivity and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging;
- Spreading opportunities and improving public services, especially in those areas where they are weakest;
- Restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost;
- Empowering local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.



Transport



Method of Travel - 2019



The Challenge

Across the ten combined authority areas, the WMCA had the second highest rates for car or motorbike use, as well as the second lowest public transport use and active travel. Similarly, the percentage of the West Midlands population able to access three strategic centres in 45 minutes, by public transport, during morning peak times, continues to fall.

The West Midlands needs to reverse these trends and create a sustainable urban transport system for the future, with a high quality integrated public transport network and attractive conditions for walking and cycling. Such a system will tackle the challenges of today – including economic growth, public health issues, and climate change.

The Prize

The Levelling Up White Paper pledges to deliver London-style transport across the UK. West Midlands transport links will be “significantly closer to the standards of London”, with improved services, simpler fares, and integrated ticketing by 2030. Other transport measures will also support our wider LTP5 sustainable transport strategy.

Our proposals will ensure the region is better connected in a sustainable, safe, and inclusive way that delivers value for money for the taxpayer – whilst also tackling the climate emergency.

Progress So Far...

The devolution process has improved collaboration over planning and operating an integrated transport system, including the statutory duty to adopt the Local Transport Plan. Achievements to date include delivery of the West Midlands Cycle Hire Scheme, upgraded railways stations, the delivery of the expansion of the West Midlands Metro light rail system and a new cross city Sprint Bus Rapid Transit routes.

The WMCA also secured £1.05 billion in funding as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme in 2022. This will build on WMCA’s long track record of partnership working, successful delivery, and innovative solutions for transport investments. There has also been positive progress for active travel with new, high quality segregated cycle routes and delivery of the West Midlands Cycle Hire Scheme.

Levelling Up Mission

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By 2030, local public transport connectivity across the country will be significantly closer to the standards of London, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing.



Our Proposal

- We want to accelerate the delivery of transport services and infrastructure to improve accessibility and affordability – we can achieve this by designating the WMCA as the UK’s first Trailblazer Transport Regulatory Sandbox area.
- Working in partnership with government and our local authorities, we would seek to improve traffic flows and access through traffic officers, build on micro-mobility solutions, and establish a bus operating company to reduce costs. This will build on WMCA’s long track record of partnership working, successful delivery, and innovative solutions for transport investments such as Very Light Rail (VLR).
- We’ll decarbonise and electrify our transport infrastructure – this could be supported by devolving the commercial Bus Services Operator Grant (BSOG) funding directly to WMCA and reducing freight vehicle emissions.
- A programme to change behaviours to reduce traffic and create safer streets to walk and wheel – we propose creating mobility credits to incentivise public transport use, sharing revenue of speed camera fines (DD) and powers over pavement parking enforcement (DD).

What We Hope to Achieve

We have the chance to improve both affordability and accessibility of the public transport network for all West Midlands residents, particularly helping those who are struggling with travel costs to access work opportunities. Travel behaviour changes will also support our sustainable development aims.

By decarbonising and electrifying our transport infrastructure, we can deliver a green revolution which helps to tackle the climate emergency and improve air quality.

These outcomes will be measured against the below WM Outcomes Framework indicators:

- Proportion of WM population within 15 minutes of key services/amenities centres accessible without a car;
- Percentage of WM population able to access 3 strategic centres in 45 minutes by public transport in the AM peak;
- Reduction in carbon dioxide emissions (tCO₂e);
- Reduction in overall vehicle km travelled;
- Increase in non-car mode share by km travelled and by trips.

Skills



The Challenge

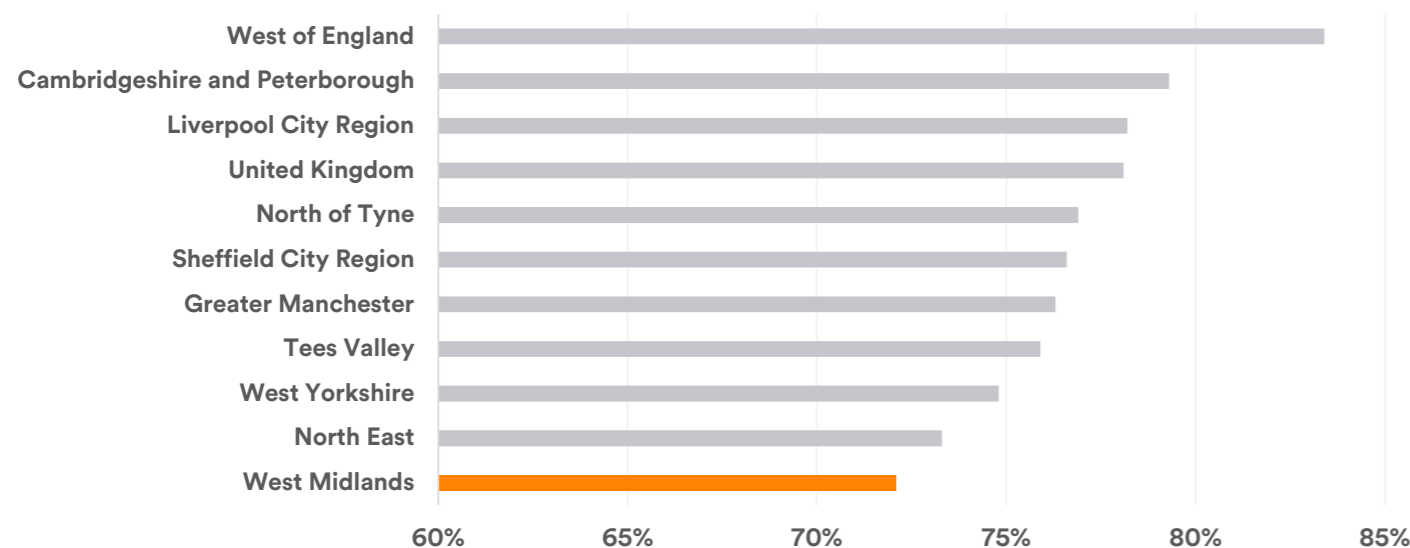
To realise successful post-pandemic growth the region needs to address key labour market challenges:

- High unemployment and growing in-work poverty in some parts of the region;
- Low skill levels in the population, with fewer people qualified to Level 4+, and more people with no qualifications, compared to other areas;
- 83% of residents in the combined authority area are qualified to Level 1 (vs 88% UK), 72% to Level 2 (vs 78% UK) and 54% to Level 3 (vs 61% UK);
- Around 1 in 4 vacancies in the region are classed as ‘hard to fill’, particularly in roles that require advanced and/or higher skills;
- Uneven development and attainment by young people through early years, primary, secondary, tertiary education and training;
- The West Midlands has some significant concentrations of residents who are unemployed, for example in Birmingham the rate is 11.4%, inactive or in low paid work and on benefits (125,505 in-work Universal Credit claimants).

The Prize

A co-ordinated regional approach to skills and employment will drive up productivity, skills and living standards in the West Midlands. We’ll look to adopt a demand-led strategy with a comprehensive view of what is needed for both high-growth clusters and for the foundational economy.

At a regional level, we can encourage change while minimising the risk of narrowly-focused sector plans. We’ll still enable a place-based approach to deliver a differentiated service that targets those who need support most — integrated data to support this work would be more cost-effective and support better outcomes for young people.



Percentage of Working-Age Residents with NVQ2+ qualifications, UK-wide and Across the Combined Authorities in 2021:

Levelling Up Mission

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By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high quality-skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas.

Progress So Far...

We’re keen to build on the success of previous devolution and our Skills Deal, to maximise our economic potential through improving productivity and aligning the regional skills offer to regional needs.

Our ability to use devolved funds has helped us focus on tackling key local needs:

- 33% increase in provision aligned to local priorities, including 66% increase in new digital courses;
- Over 2,500 digital skills enrolments at Level 3 through AEB and bootcamps;
- £7.3m spent on construction training, compared with £4.8m pre-devolution;
- 6% increase in those qualified to NVQ Level 3+ since 2018, rising from 49% to 55%;
- 8x increase in business and professional learners at level 3 since devolution, rising from 150 pre-devolution to 1,150 in 2020/21.

Our Proposal

We’ve been hampered by a lack of local engagement from the National Career Service (NCS), meaning, in particular, our young people not in education or work have suffered from a lack of support.

Across the CA area, the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) is higher than the UK average, for example, in Wolverhampton the youth claimant count is double the national average. At present, no single organisation is accountable for 16 to 24-year-olds NEET.

Therefore, we propose an integrated skills and employment system composed of:

- 1 Leadership of an enhanced Local Skills Improvement Plan, providing greater responsibility for technical and vocational training in the region to create a clear and integrated offer for employers and learners that will drive up higher-level skills.
- 2 Devolution of careers and establishment of a post-16 data hub to better support those young people and adults who are most vulnerable to labour market change, to navigate a more integrated skills offer, and access high value labour market opportunities.
- 3 Co-commissioning Employment Support, meaning programmes respond quickly and effectively to local labour market challenges and better meet the needs of residents, businesses, and the West Midlands economy.

What We Hope to Achieve

- An increase in the percentage of those aged 16-18 in sustained education, apprenticeships or employment;
- A decrease in the percentage of residents aged 25-39 years old whose highest qualifications are NVQ2 and below;
- Increased number of apprenticeship starts;
- Increased percentage of young people achieving GCSEs in English and Maths by age 19;
- Increased graduate retention;
- Narrowing of the gap between areas of high and low unemployment.

Retrofit



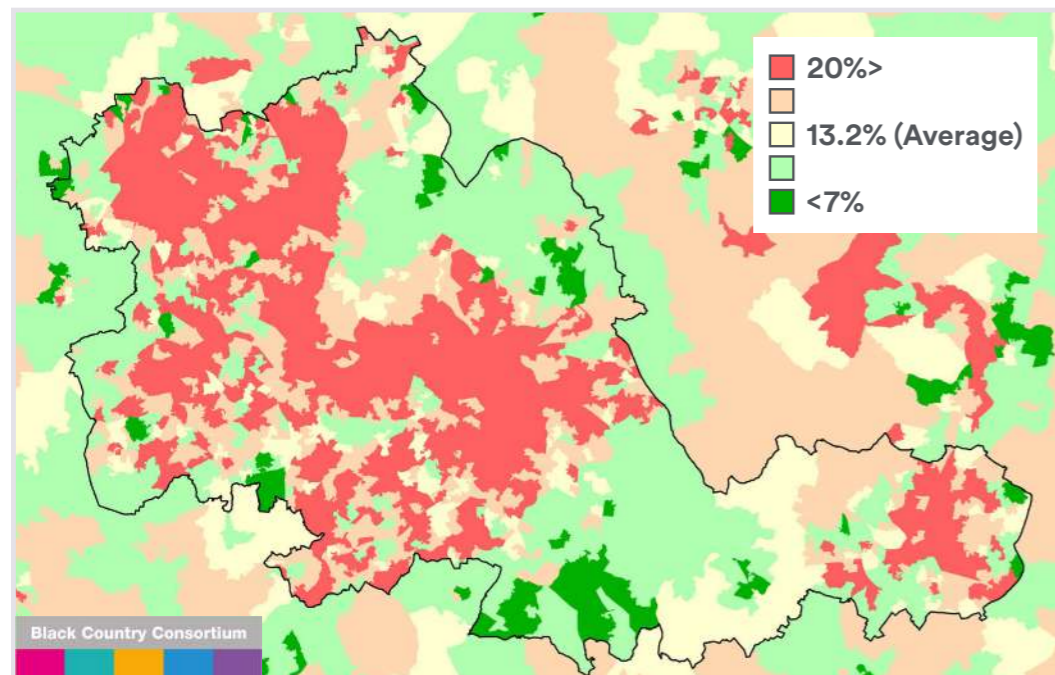
The Challenge

There are an estimated 235,512 fuel poor homes in the West Midlands — the highest rate of fuel poverty in any English region at 17.5%, with some areas experiencing much higher rates of over 40%.

Over half of neighbourhoods in the West Midlands are in the bottom 20% when it comes to fuel poverty, nearly three times the national average in terms of fuel poverty. The recent Energy Price Cap to address current fuel price rises provides some short-term support but means energy efficiency is critical to managing public expenditure.

Cold homes can affect or exacerbate a range of health problems including respiratory and circulatory problems and increase the risk of poor mental health. It's estimated that 10% of excess winter deaths are directly attributable to fuel poverty, and a fifth of excess winter deaths are attributable to the coldest quarter of homes. Cold homes can also affect wider issues, such as educational performance among children and young people, as well as work absences.

Fuel Poverty (2020) by LSOA compared to England average (13.2%)



Source: Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy – Sub-regional fuel poverty 2020, released April 2022

Levelling Up Mission

There is no government Levelling Up Mission on Net Zero or Retrofit, but we expect our retrofit programme to contribute indirectly to both the Health and Wellbeing missions, as well as Pride in Place, and assist the government in achieving its legal net zero target.

Progress So Far...

The WMCA and its partner local authorities are already ramping up retrofit activity through government funded programmes including Sustainable Warmth Competition (SWC), Local Authority Delivery (LAD) and the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF). We've also used self-funded initiatives such as WMCA's Net Zero Neighbourhoods programme and Birmingham City Council's whole house retrofit demonstrators. Through our SMART Hub team, we've invested in detailed modelling for every home in the WMCA area, which is available for all partners to use to help prioritise investment and support decision making. Our three biggest cities have also set out their desire to scale up the retrofit of their social housing stock through the Three Cities initiative.

Our Proposal

- Allocate the West Midlands fair share of the remaining to the region from the remaining HUG and SHDF streams (£1.6bn) for on-the-ground retrofit delivery;
- Increase flexibility within the eligibility criteria of these funds and ring-fence proportions for innovation, engagement, and digitisation;
- Provide funding (over 3 years) to build capacity in LAs – retrofit officers, and housing enforcement officers, including support for 3 Cities Initiative;
- Strengthen WMCA's role with ECO suppliers including greater control over the region's fair share of ECO funding (approximately £298.3m over four years);
- Commit to a longer-term collaboration between BEIS and WMCA, including development of long-term block-funding for retrofit to the region;
- Invest funding in a range of retrofit innovation programmes;
- Offer funding in loan guarantees to support the creation of a £15m loan fund to be made available to businesses to develop retrofit services.



What We Hope to Achieve

Based on an assessment of our own housing stock retrofit needs, and an in-depth analysis of the economic benefits of retrofit, we expect our retrofit programmes can deliver:

- Directly funded retrofits in 140,000 homes over a 10-year period;
- Stimulate an additional £1bn investment in retrofit from public and private sector finance;
- Support market activity to partial or whole house retrofit of 240,000 additional homes
- Reduce carbon emissions by 1,338 ktCO₂/year;
- Generate annual fuel bill savings of £91m;
- Support creation of around 6,000 long-term jobs (though the eventual number of regional retrofit jobs created could be as much as five times greater);
- Generate £3.20 per £1 spent on retrofit through increased GDP (£10.8bn in total);
- Generate £1.25 in tax revenue for every £1 of government investment (£1.75bn in total).

Special Feature: Levelling Up Investment Zones

What is it?

This new approach aims to transform parts of the West Midlands that urgently need more investment in housing, transport, digital, and energy infrastructure, but they also need improved skills, public services, and cultural activities.

They are defined areas which combine the best of existing national policy on Freeports and Enterprise Zones with local accountability, collaboration, and innovation.

Crucially, they are designed to unlock private investment alongside public funding to bring regeneration to those parts of the region that need levelling up more than others and improve accessibility through better co-ordination of transport and land use. We are already proving our ability to deliver such co-ordinated interventions through the CRSTS programme.

Key Features

- An agreed business plan and masterplan of development and regeneration to deliver significant additional homes, jobs and floorspace and wider levelling up objectives over 25 - 30 years, along a major transport corridor or similar clearly defined area.
- Self-financing and income generation through 100% business rates growth retention, long-term investment in public land as equity, and a Revolving Property Fund model which would capture a share of land value increases and profits.
- A focus on attracting substantial new private sector investment taking advantage of appetite for environmental, social, and governance investments.
- A supportive and business-minded planning environment that accelerates decision making, unlocks barriers, and provides investor certainty.
- Seeking major strategic partners for the whole corridor, rather than site-by-site investments, to provide scale for investors and long-term commitment to delivery of placemaking objectives.
- Providing incentives to accelerate delivery and provide certainty for investors, for example Development Consent Orders, rate reliefs, build out agreements, commitments to future public transport and enabling infrastructure.
- A strong governance model to give private sector partners and Whitehall clarity, certainty and confidence in the vision and decision-making.

Our Proposal

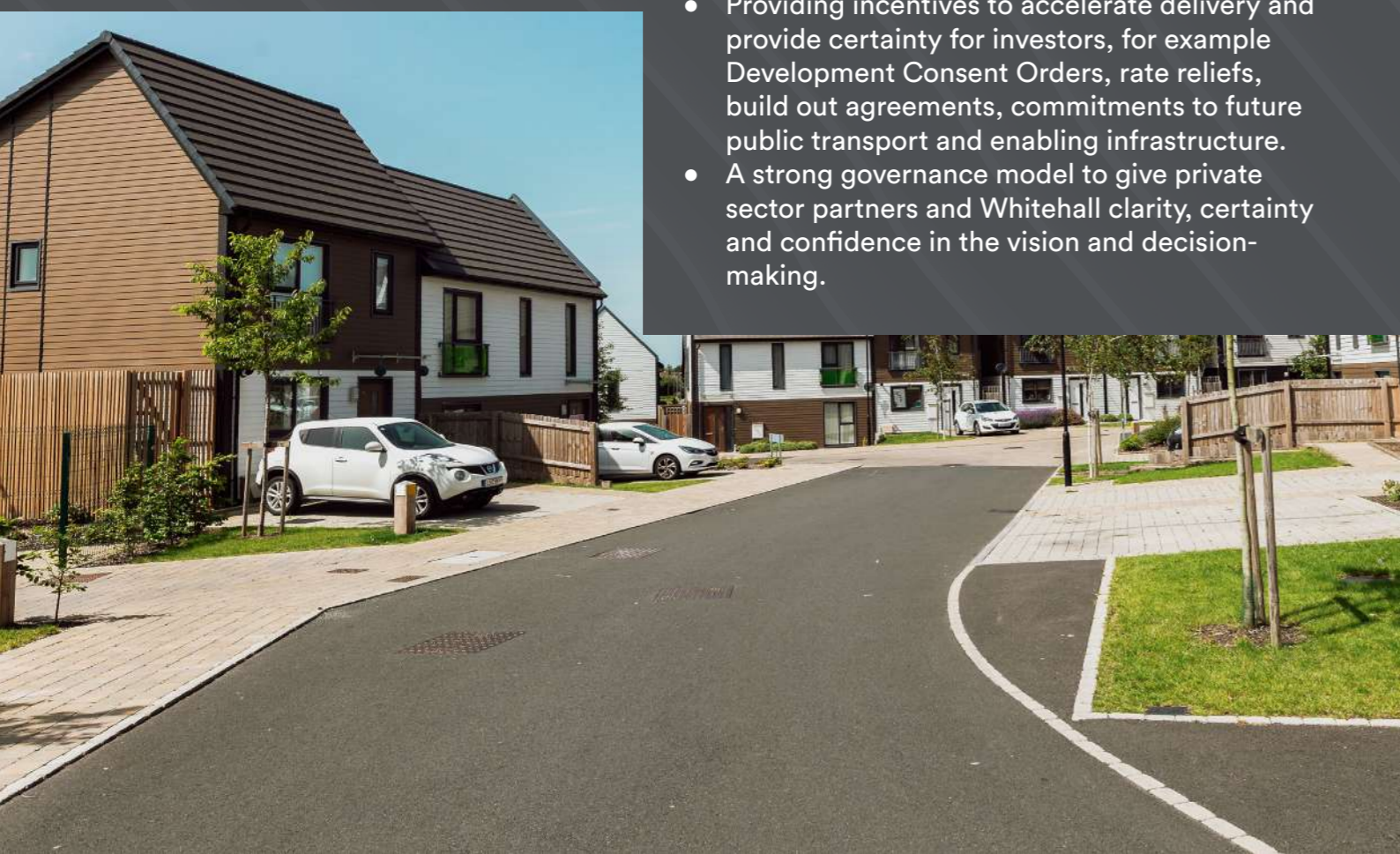
There has already been significant enthusiasm from government for this concept, and we're working closely with them on how it might be implemented. However, there are several commitments we're seeking from government to unlock the full extent of the proposals. These include:

- Committing to Business rates retention for Zones for 25 - 30 years;
- Piloting Stamp Duty Land Tax retention for new homes built in Zones;
- Piloting land investment from HMG agencies and Departments in Zones to demonstrate cross-sector commitment to partnership and innovation;
- Granting additional powers to the WMCA to unlock barriers to delivery, for example on CPO compensation;
- Grant WMCA flexibilities over how to use existing grant funds in zones, maximising investment opportunities and exploring options for new models;
- A whole-place approach to public services, with an initial focus on employment and skills to drive economic growth.

Where would Levelling Up Investment Zones be?

We are seeking to pilot Levelling Up Investment Zones in defined areas which were identified in our 2022 Investment Prospectus. These would include:

- Wednesbury to Brierley Hill: maximising opportunities unlocked by the Metro;
- East Birmingham / North Solihull: focused on improving transport links, driving regeneration, and tackling deprivation;
- UK Central: making the most of the nationally significant opportunities around HS2, the motorway network and Birmingham Airport;
- We are co-developing proposals for a number of other areas: Walsall to Wolverhampton including the Green Innovation Corridor; M54 Corridor (Telford-Shropshire); and the South Coventry / Warwick Innovation Corridor.





The Challenge

Birmingham and Solihull are two of the UK's key growth centres, but are also home to communities experiencing some of the highest levels of deprivation and exclusion. Some of the key challenges residents face are:

- 72% of wards in East Birmingham and North Solihull (EBNS) are in the top 10% in England for deprivation;
- 55% of Birmingham's most deprived wards are in East Birmingham, the highest concentration of deprivation outside London;
- There is a decade of difference between the life expectancy of the poorest areas of East Birmingham and the most affluent areas;
- Average household income is more than 30% lower in North Solihull than the rest of Solihull;
- 35% of East Birmingham residents are economically inactive against 23% nationally;
- East Birmingham has some of the country's highest unemployment – two East Birmingham constituencies comprise nearly 1% of the total UK claimant count;
- Unemployment is consistently high in North Solihull across generations;
- Transport connectivity is poor, with some young people facing a 2-hour journey to college by public transport;
- Much of the existing housing stock is poor quality and have low energy efficiency ratings;
- Fuel poverty in East Birmingham is among the highest in the country;
- Access to high quality green space is limited.

The Prize

If communities have good transport connections, the right skills, and early years and childcare (to reduce maternal unemployment), the major employment sites can offer large numbers of locally accessible jobs.

Transport connections will increase business growth, and at the same time, investing in public services, green spaces, and improving housing quality and sustainability will improve citizen outcomes and increase pride in place.

We also have an opportunity to invest in community infrastructure to improve multi-disciplinary teams working across health and social care.

Progress So Far...

Birmingham City Council and Solihull Council have already made significant strides towards levelling up in EBNS, on which the Trailblazer Devolution Deal would build. This includes:

East Birmingham

- Birmingham has published a leading Levelling Up Strategy and East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy, setting out five 'Levelling Up Accelerators';
- Programmes are supporting the strategies including on health and wellbeing, skills, early intervention, early years, business support, housing, and transport;
- A youth employment support service with training and mentoring for school leavers;
- The Tyseley Energy Park in East Birmingham is delivering solutions for low and zero carbon transport infrastructure and power, heat, waste, and recycling.

North Solihull

- Solihull's 2022 Council Plan refresh prioritised investment to tackle inequalities in North Solihull, along with an inclusive growth outcomes framework to target future interventions;
- All primary schools in North Solihull have been rebuilt or extensively refurbished.;
- There's outline planning application for Kingshurst Village Centre following previous schemes at Chelmund's Cross and Smith's Wood;
- The regeneration focuses on buildings and infrastructure as well as the community hub and services;
- There are also developing plans to regenerate Chelmsley Wood town centre.

Our Proposal

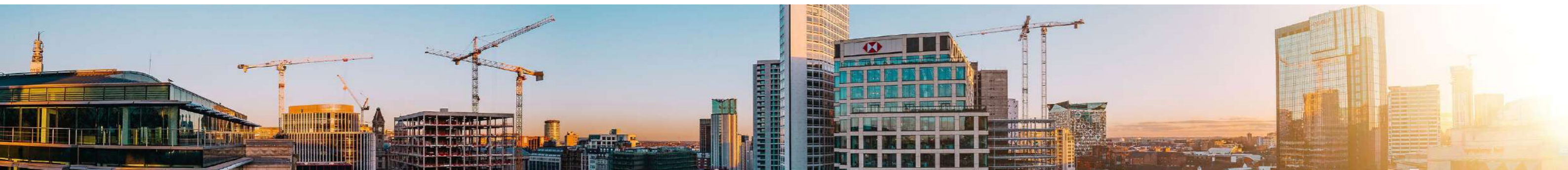
Devolving powers will enable EBNS, an area which faces some of the highest levels of deep-seated inequalities in the country, to benefit at pace and scale from levelling up.

To combat inequalities quickly we must learn from and build on past success, as well as avoid known pitfalls. We need to think about the area in its entirety, joining up services and intervention between providers and effective place-making.

The proposal for EBNS is a Levelling Up Investment Zone that joins up a single pot for delivery of infrastructure and physical development. We'll also adopt a whole place approach to integrated public services through multi-year and devolved funding, and pooled budgets.

Our public services proposal is to develop multi-year whole place funding and integration of service in EBNS as a pilot area. This would bring together multiple existing funding streams and pool them from across the public sector, and services would work to improve early intervention and prevention and reverse long-term trends.

Investment would be centred on Enterprise Zone measures and an innovative tax increment financing (TIF) mechanism that will support the necessary infrastructure investment across the area. We'd address the transport connectivity issues, harnessing the benefit of HS2 stations to make a transformational whole place impact.





Section B: Rebooting the Economy

Rebooting the Economy

Pre-pandemic, the West Midlands was the fastest growing regional economy outside London. However, to return to this position, we must address the underlying productivity challenges we face and create more higher-paid local jobs.

To do this, we need new powers to reboot economic growth.

We need a new model of consolidated, co-commissioned business support and, building on our Innovation Accelerator, we need to secure our fair share of public R&D investment.

We want to work closely with UKRI to unlock opportunities in health tech and growing low carbon technologies, and our Global West Midlands programme requires a new relationship and support from the Office for Investment.

Crucially, our 16,000 energy intensive SMEs require a unique approach to addressing escalating energy costs and making the low carbon transition.

The West Midlands economy has the potential to be the engine room of the UK's green industrial revolution.

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A strong economic recovery is at the heart of levelling up where everyone contributes to, and benefits from, growth. Increasing jobs growth, investment and productivity will drive the wider social outcomes of the levelling up agenda and the Government's key missions.

West Midlands Regional Business Council

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Business Support & Innovation

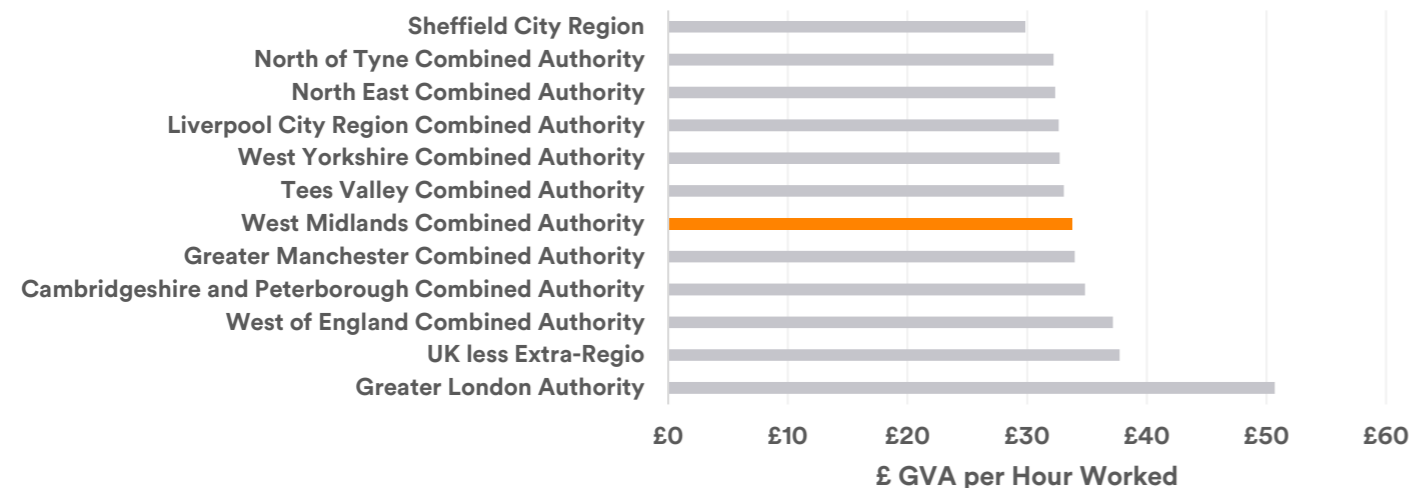


The Challenge

The West Midlands economy is at a critical point — before the Covid pandemic, we had forged a position as the fastest-growing region outside London and broke through the £100 billion economic output mark. The region's industrial mix and demography meant the West Midlands was hit particularly hard by the economic impact of the pandemic and new trade frictions with the EU.

Whilst the region's productivity levels are relatively strong in certain sectors, such as advanced manufacturing and automotive, it performs less well against the national UK average — 11% between authority areas within the region.

GVA Per Hour - 2020



Progress So Far...

To ensure a quick return to growth, whilst building resilience, the West Midlands has developed a landmark new strategy — Plan for Growth. It seeks to accelerate and amplify growth to become the fastest growing region outside of London by 2030. This document provides the basis for the Trailblazer Devolution Deal proposals.

Overseen by the Economic Growth and Innovation Boards, the West Midlands is already delivering using existing powers and funding through:

The Prize

A new co-commissioned business support model will harness the region's economic potential, improve productivity and provide flexibility to adapt to an increasingly challenging economic environment by investing in tailored support to tackle barriers to innovation, enable diversification and access to new markets, and promote sustainability. In the Levelling Up White Paper, the Government announced the development of the West Midlands Innovation Accelerator, which will see around £33m invested in the region over the next three years. This initial investment, coupled with our proposals to ensure a proper legacy for the Innovation Accelerator, would give us the opportunity to boost economic growth and target and affect societal challenges in the West Midlands.

- UK Shared Prosperity Fund, using a proportion of the £88m for business support;
- Core Growth Hub offer;
- Regional business support programmes, such as West Midlands Made Smarter;
- Private sector-led cluster leadership, aligning with specialist regional capacity on trade, foreign direct investment, and innovation.

Work has also begun on developing the West Midlands Innovation Accelerator with ideation workshops having taken place and various expressions of interest received.

Levelling Up Mission

1

By 2030, pay, employment and productivity will have risen in every area of the UK, with each containing a globally competitive city, and the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.

Our Proposal

Business Support

We want to agree and co-commission with Government a joined-up approach to business support in the region. We will:

- Resource and align local targeting of key fund streams such as UKSPF, Growth Hubs, and business support resources including British Business Bank funding;
- Establish an integrated key account management service of the region's top 500 strategic businesses – building the work of the Midlands Engine Hub into cohesive regional structures;
- Increased access to, and alignment of, central Government insight and information to inform delivery (e.g. HMRC R&D tax credits).

Innovation

We want to use the capability and capacity from the West Midlands Innovation Accelerator to double the amount of public R&D investment in the West Midlands by 2030. This means:

- West Midlands maintaining a prioritised pipeline of R&D projects which are considered by UKRI, its Research Councils and other public innovation agencies when they develop their business plans;
- UKRI and its agencies like Catapults (including those based outside the region) capturing their place-based impact on the region's business base and communities.



What We Hope to Achieve

A more co-ordinated approach to business support would help increase economic growth and the number of jobs in transformational sectors, as well as productivity. We would also see a reduction in the number of jobs paid below living wage, in line with the metrics detailed in both the Levelling Up White Paper and the WM Outcomes Framework.

Increased public R&D investment would increase the leverage of private sector investment. As a result, we would see additional growth in areas that benefit from R&D, and more broadly, they would have the ability to address societal challenges in the West Midlands - including those relating to the environment, health, and wellbeing.



Global West Midlands (Trade & Investment)



The Challenge

As it stands, 55% of UK Foreign Direct Investment goes to London and the South East, and while FDI into the West Midlands has grown, it is not at the pace of these other areas.

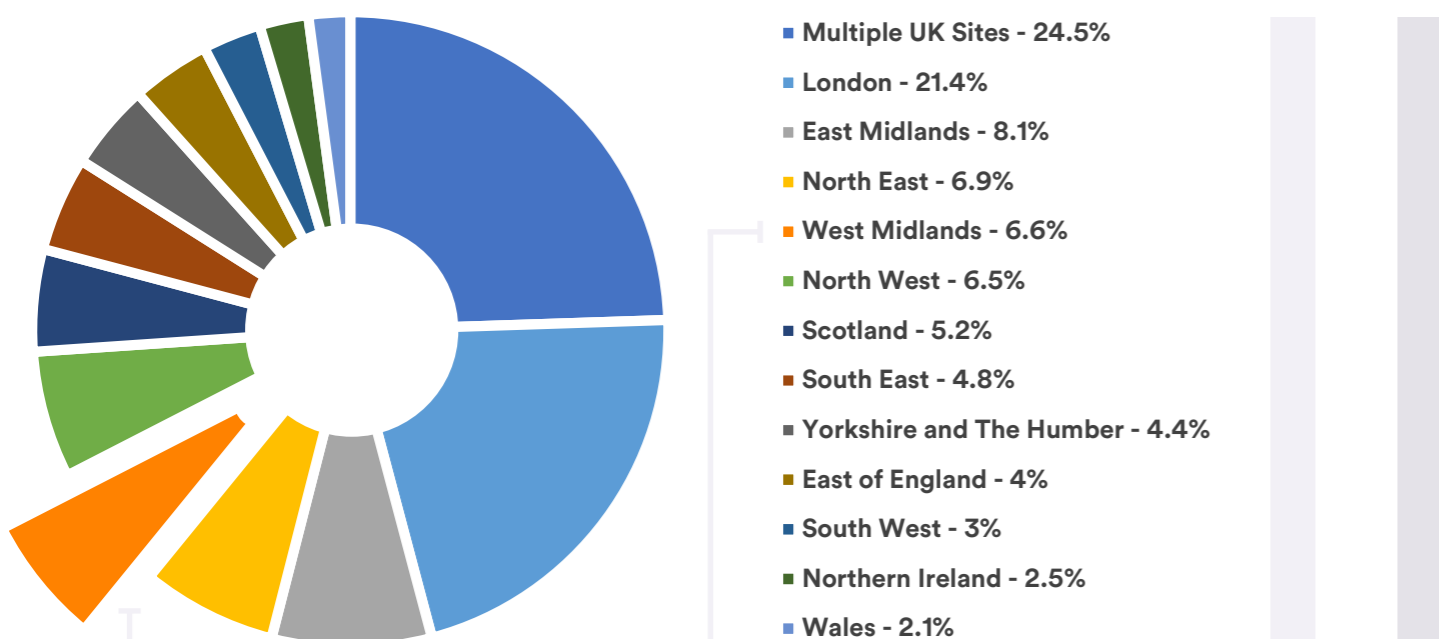
The West Midlands is also seriously compromised by the imbalance in funding between the English regions and the devolved nations – demonstrated by recent evidence that the Welsh Government is targeting WM companies to relocate.

Moreover, less than 30% of international leisure tourists are aware of the WM offer (compared to 75% for London and 50% for Manchester); less than half of investment intermediaries are aware of the WM offer compared to nearly all for London and almost 80% for Manchester.

The Prize

A ‘Global West Midlands’ programme that builds on the Business and Tourism Programme to give the region the mandate and funding required to punch its weight on the global stage. Communities and supply chains in the West Midlands will also benefit from Foreign Direct Investment into the region, from increased trade opportunities, and businesses in the visitor economy.

Share of UK FDI New Jobs - 2021/22



Progress So Far...

The Business and Tourism Programme (BATP) – designed and delivered in partnership between the West Midlands Combined Authority, the West Midlands Growth Company, the Department for International Trade (DIT), VisitBritain and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) – is delivering the economic legacy of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

This is an innovative approach to delivering tourism, trade, and investment, which has never been delivered elsewhere in the UK, and has developed the region’s institutional capital significantly.

It’s expected that the Business and Tourism Programme will have a GVA impact of £53m and have created over 1,000 new jobs.

Levelling Up Mission

1

By 2030, pay, employment and productivity will have risen in every area of the UK, with each containing a globally competitive city, and the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.

Our Proposal

We want to help the West Midlands recover and rebuild after the pandemic, creating more opportunities, better jobs and boosting living standards.

Our proposals will deliver a number of the government’s specific objectives – notably, attracting and retaining inward investment, supporting UK businesses to take full advantage of trade opportunities, global marketing of UK regions as tourist destinations, winning more international business events, and extending the season and length of stay for both domestic and international visitors. To achieve this, we propose that:

- We co-design with Government a West Midlands Internationalisation Strategy to deliver regional and national priorities, with the West Midlands Growth Company formally recognised as the de facto lead agency for Trade and Investment across the West Midlands;
- The Department for International Trade to become a shareholder of the West Midlands Growth Company alongside the WMCA, 7 local authorities and 5 universities;
- We implement the recommendations of the De Bois Review into destination management organisations;
- We create a new regionally administered investment incentive fund drawn from the Global Britain Investment Fund;
- We deepen and formalise the relationship between the Office for Investment and West Midlands on capital investment outcomes;
- We secure additional investment for the internationalisation of the Plan for Growth.

What We Hope to Achieve

We want the region to be more competitive, relative to the devolved administrations and international competition. We’ll do this through the allocation of incentive funding and the development of regionally targeted policies – such as sector/cluster focus programmes, supply chain growth and spatial regeneration priorities. Our proposals will:

- Increase GVA and jobs in transformational sectors, in line with the West Midlands Outcome Framework;
- Boost regional exports (# firms exporting and volume) and narrow the trade deficit;
- Increase GVA per hour and deliver economic growth across the region, providing financial support and expertise to potential exporters;
- Increase the visitor economy;
- Attract businesses to accelerate the net zero transition, increase innovation and productivity in science and technology, and help make the West Midlands be the best place to start and grow a business;
- Realise increased foreign direct investment in the region and growth in the number of projects and jobs landed.



Local Area Energy Planning



The Challenge

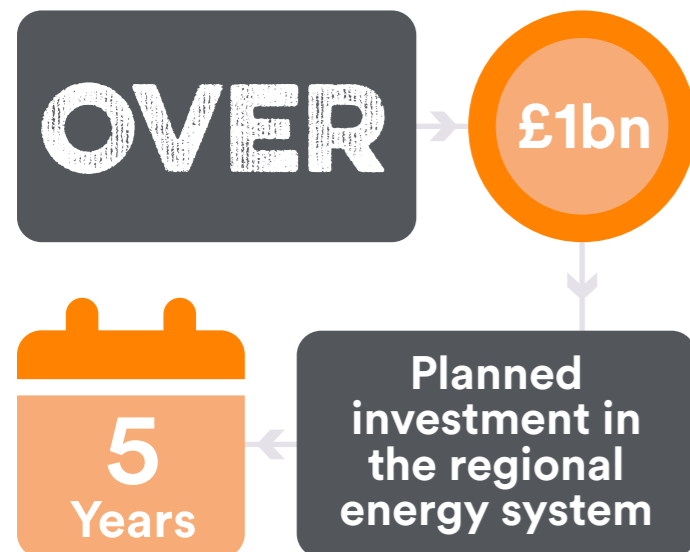
The UK is facing unprecedented energy challenges. The government has sought to address this through various initiatives, however, due to its geography the West Midlands is unlikely to gain substantially from any of these.

In addition, the West Midlands is also at risk of losing its manufacturing and industrial base to areas with direct access to sustainable energy sources – a situation perpetuated through the recent UK Energy Security Strategy where benefits will primarily accrue to coastal regions.

The Prize

The main benefit of enhanced energy security is the ability to build resilience against cost fluctuations, reduce fuel poverty, and reduce business vulnerability.

By having better informed and integrated investment and planning for new energy, we'll realise savings in energy, more efficient infrastructure roll-out, increased economic resilience and business opportunities, and support the net zero and decarbonisation agenda.



The West Midlands is the UK's leading region for comprehensive place-based energy planning and the development of a smarter, more effective and efficient energy market.

Progress So Far...

We've delivered on our commitments from the 2017 devolution deal — to explore and develop regional governance and policy mechanisms which complement national market regulation, while also accelerating local demand-led economic opportunities, supporting the commercialisation of energy systems, and unlocking clean energy investment opportunities.

With initial investment of £150,000 from Government, Energy Capital, a unique public-private partnership, has brought a further £50 million of value to the West Midlands region, and demonstrated the savings and value to be accrued from smart, place-based, energy systems.

One powerful example of the value of this evidence-based research is the PFER design project RESO (Regional Systems Energy Operator). This identified a net present value of approximately £720 million in savings over 30 years from taking a place-based approach to planning and operating the whole energy system. Additionally, there was a further £34 million of savings per year for its host locality, which in this case was the city of Coventry.

We have also established a Net Zero Infrastructure Delivery Panel to give confidence to Ofgem and providers when powers over zone designation, regulation derogation and infrastructure implementation are devolved to the region.

Levelling Up Mission

1

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Our Proposal

Building on our research and delivery experience, these proposals seek the devolution of powers and funds (£9.12 million over 5 years) to conduct Local Area Energy Plans. Through these plans, energy innovation zoning can be effectively trialled and implemented to meet the specific requirements, or levelling up opportunities, of an area.

By exploring a range of potential technologies and scenarios, when combined with powerful stakeholder engagement, a Local Area Energy Plan will identify the most cost-effective pathway and plan for achieving the energy system's net zero transition.

In order to unlock the power of local area energy planning we need:

- A duty on the Combined Authority to coordinate and raise funds to deliver Local Area Energy Plans and integrate their findings into strategic and spatial plans, alongside the opportunity to advise the FSO on its engagement with local partners;
- The ability for the Mayor, with local authority agreement, to designate specific EIZs, including zero carbon industrial zones, housing retrofit and heat zones, with appropriate, relevant and impactful regulatory flexibilities;
- Enhanced involvement in investment decision-making, including:
 - targeting DNO infrastructure investment to greatest need;
 - Triggering net zero re-openers;
 - Supporting place-based representation to Ofgem Code reviews;
 - Empowering public-private investment models for EIZ delivery;
 - Allocation of OZEV funding to enable rapid charging on the key route network.



What We Hope to Achieve

The WM RESO project (West Midlands Regional Energy Systems Operator) has already demonstrated the scale of savings and financial return to be accrued from place-based energy infrastructure planning and more effective energy market. It will also result in key outcomes including:

- Reducing carbon emissions;
- Increasing renewable energy opportunities;
- Increasing economic activity and GVA in key sectors.

Industrial Decarbonisation



The Challenge

The West Midlands is home to more established mid-sized manufacturing businesses than any other UK region. Our 16,000 energy-exposed companies are the bedrock of the regional economy and critical to national supply chains, employing almost 300,000 people and contributing £22bn in GVA a year.

The combination of the global energy crisis and the transition to net zero threatens not only their existence, but that of many strategic national supply chains in which they form critical links. These businesses are the engines of national economic growth, but they are extremely difficult to replace once lost, and are now being driven offshore.

Our challenge is to support these businesses through an industrial transition so they can continue to support economic growth while reconfiguring and relocating within the UK, protecting jobs and GVA not only in the West Midlands, but across the UK.

The Prize

We will transform the traditional manufacturing base of our region into a modern, creative advanced manufacturing economy, retaining skilled jobs in the region and country, and supporting accelerated economic growth, at least 20,000 new jobs, and delivery of an additional £16 billion of GVA.

Established and strategic energy-intensive businesses which are no longer viable in a zero-carbon, energy-constrained region will be retained for the UK through targeted regeneration and relocation initiatives, reducing carbon emissions and avoiding further leakage of jobs and wealth to competing national economies.

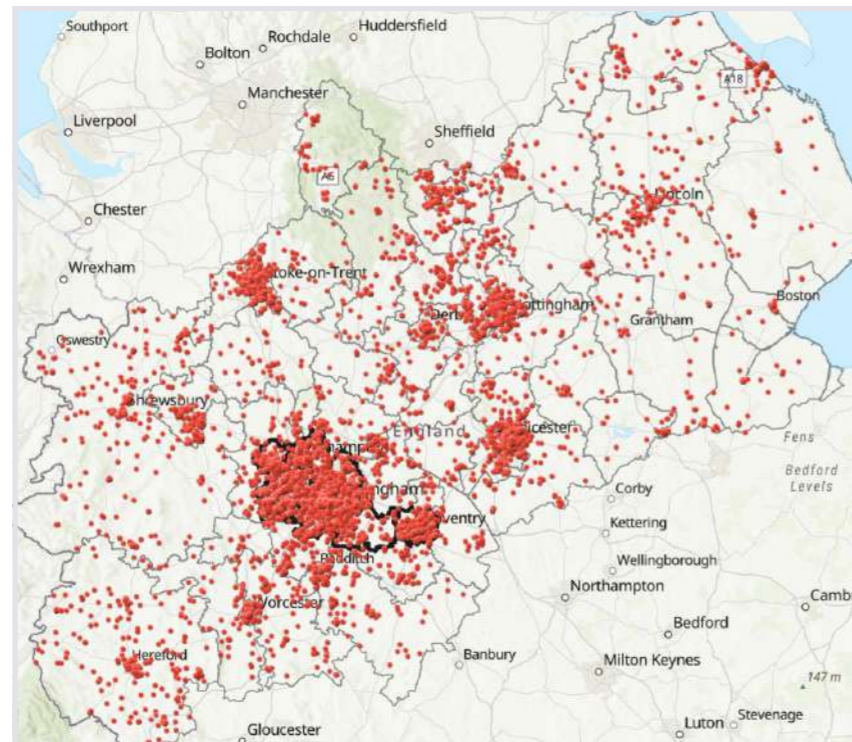
Progress So Far...

The Repowering the Black Country programme brings together representatives from over 3000 energy-exposed companies and is working as part of the national industrial decarbonisation programme, focusing on dispersed sites.

The partnership has identified measures that companies could realistically adopt to reduce their energy reliance and increase their energy resilience. The findings from this have underpinned these proposals – ensuring they are relevant, impactful, and deliverable. They also clearly demonstrated the extensive economic impacts that the region faces if these challenges are not addressed.

The Mayor of the West Midlands has also established an Industrial Energy Taskforce, bringing multiple stakeholders to identify and scope new initiatives that might further contribute to the industrial decarbonisation agenda.

Source: Black Country Consortium



Energy Intensive Companies Across the WMCA

● Energy Intensive Companies

Levelling Up Mission

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Our Proposal

- Devolve control over £30m of energy efficiency funding support for industry to the region, to enable more effective and efficient targeting.
- Establish a new West Midlands Industrial Transition Company in partnership with strategic manufacturers to take forward the recommendations of the Mayor's Industrial Energy Taskforce and Repowering the Black Country across the whole region.
- Give the Mayor and WMCA the power to designate and manage Zero Carbon Industrial Hubs to offer attractive environments and infrastructure for modern clean manufacturing and inward investors.

What We Hope to Achieve

Boosting The Economy

As well as reducing energy costs and helping businesses transition, we want to release brownfield land for housing, so a combination of hubs and support programmes for businesses to move to locations is key. Industrial hubs will include business models and special vehicles offering local authorities opportunities to participate and secure revenue streams.

Delivery mechanisms will be local authority led, and only supported by regional capacity or resources where this makes economic sense. At least eight potential hubs across the region are already under development (six in the Black Country). The aim is for this to be a pilot scheme which can be rolled out nationally, creating a model for industrial decarbonisation suitable for inland industrial regions and SMEs.

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West Midlands' industry is an unique national asset, and spiralling energy costs and the imperative to transition to net zero mean we need to accelerate our drive for economic renaissance across the region.

Matthew Rhodes, Chair, West Midlands Industrial Energy Taskforce

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Digital Infrastructure: Regional Fibre Broadband Backbone



The Challenge

In the modern era, reliable broadband is arguably one of the most important utilities available — without it, growth and productivity across the whole region would suffer. It allows greater access to education and employment opportunities for the public, as well as allowing businesses to connect with the world and increase productivity.

At present, the region's full fibre coverage is inconsistent and sporadic, ranging from 85% coverage in Coventry, well over the average for England of 31%, to 18% in Wolverhampton*.

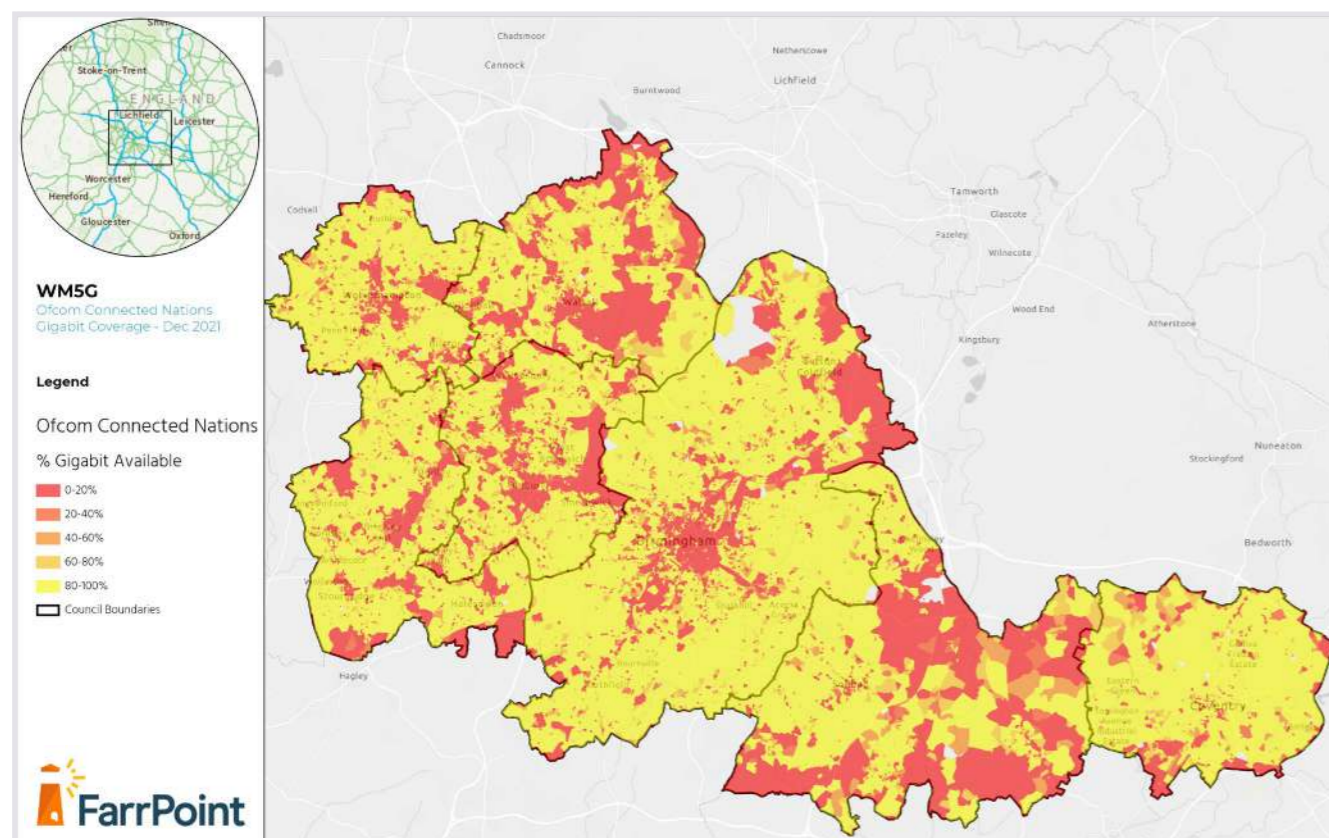
Data from Ofcom (see map below) shows that the majority of key strategic sites are located in areas with little or no Gigabit-capable infrastructure. Market feedback also suggests that the current future deployment plans are unlikely to address these sites, meaning that there is significant untapped potential within the region.

The Prize

A national report by Openreach states that, for fibre, £59 billion of value is estimated to be gained across the UK by 2025, increasing to over £70 billion by 2038.

With most businesses needing access to broadband and an increase in remote working following the Covid-19 pandemic, full fibre coverage needs to be broader and more evenly distributed across the region to allow all to benefit from the higher growth and productivity it brings.

Access to reliable broadband would help bridge the digital divide, enabling those living in deprivation access to online public services including healthcare, DWP services as well as education, skills and employment resources. Our proposals would increase full fibre coverage to a further 30,000 commercial premises and around 65,000 residential homes. This in turn would complement our regional pledge to deliver digital skills and digital adoption business support initiatives.



Levelling Up Mission

4

By 2030, the UK will have nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population.

Progress So Far...

WM5G have proven the ability to accelerate the deployment of 5G across the West Midlands by 6 - 12 months, and with the right level of investment and enablers they can do the same for fibre connectivity. WM5G has delivered 40 trials demonstrating the benefit of 5G in the West Midlands.

Where local authorities invest in Digital Champions, Digital Co-ordinators, and Digital Ambassadors, it's clear that the level of connectivity is improved. This is due to greater engagement with the telecoms industry, and the ability to identify and access public and private funding to support digital infrastructure.

Another area of successful intervention is where 'Barrier Busting' activity is undertaken. Local authorities can directly intervene utilising their Digital Co-ordinator, but where it has been most successful is when industry experts have been utilised to work with both industry and local authorities, acting as a broker to improve relationships, education, to introduce aspects of standardisation, and to intervene when blockages occur.



Our Proposal

- WMCA to address existing gaps directly and quickly in 'Full Fibre to the Premises' connectivity for the key strategic sites across the West Midlands.
- We'll do this by procuring connectivity for these sites as quickly as possible by laying down 128.7 km of new duct / fibre.
- The easiest way for this to happen would be for Project Gigabit to reprioritise its investments at the next Open Market Review.
- The majority of funding would then come from the market as the network will pass within 250 metres of around 30,000 commercial premises and around 65,000 residential homes.
- We need to set up a Central Co-ordination Body to work with the market e.g., operators. It does not involve the Combined Authority directly investing in a fibre network, but assumes a body is set up (and incurs operating costs) to work with the market to identify coverage gaps and opportunities, and provides a "one-stop" shop of advice to help providers.

What We Hope to Achieve

- Ensure that the number of premises in the region that have access to gigabit capable broadband remains above the national average.
- Accelerate the deployment of FFTP building on our track record of accelerating the delivery of 5G in the region by 6 months making the West Midlands the best-connected region for 5G.
- Deliver consistent FFTP coverage across the region distributing the opportunities that reliable broadband offers more evenly.

* Wolverhampton has recently benefited from grant funding of £4.9m from DCMS to raise its coverage from 3% to the current level of 18%, and is on track for further improvement.



Special Feature: WM Smart City Region

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In 2021 DCMS highlighted the West Midlands as having the country's fastest-growing tech sector ... The West Midlands Smart City Region Programme will scale-up digital opportunities across the region in health tech, future mobility and smart energy. It will drive new digital start-ups through practical business support and a supply of patient venture capital to attract global innovators. And it will deliver digital catch-up programmes so that everyone in the region can gain the skills and confidence to access the opportunities this will bring.

**From the Levelling Up White Paper
(Page 237)**

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The Challenge

The Covid pandemic has placed an unprecedented burden on public services – widening pre-existing disparities between communities and stifling the West Midlands' economic growth.

Waiting times for life-critical diagnoses have been at an all-time high, with an aging population and growth in chronic illness. The shift to increased public transport has waned through nervousness around exposure to Covid, causing increased congestion and pollution. The energy market has become vulnerable to price fluctuations and supply resilience, at the same time as the region strives to become net zero by 2041.

The Prize

We want to catapult the West Midlands onto the global stage as a demonstrator region for radical 'smart' technology that genuinely meets the needs of its communities – levelling up access to services and life-enhancing opportunities. At the same time, we want to drive efficiencies in service delivery to reduce the burden on the public purse, as well as catalysing new business opportunities and economic growth.

Progress So Far...

The West Midlands is already the UK's largest testing ground for 5G deployment and technological innovation, which has led to huge advances in transport, health, and manufacturing.

Fourteen Transport Innovation Projects are being developed to support the regional transport network:

- On-board sensors will be able to scan for kerbside and built environment challenges for public transport and predict tram-track maintenance issues;
- Personal applications will enhance the passenger experience through enhanced capacity management and improving accessibility for the visually impaired.

The 5G test-bed has also started to provide direct support to regional businesses to ensure they have the capability to maximise the opportunities from 5G. Its Technical Mentoring Programme provides financial support for business development and a Vodafone-powered test-bed to trial new products.



Our Proposal

A 'Smart' approach will thoroughly and effectively connect multiple service delivery channels - using sensors, data, and connectivity to optimise, and then transform, supply and demand. This will be achieved through six approaches:

Smart Road and Rail Services

Installing connected sensors to the road and rail infrastructure to improve performance and flow, reduce congestion and pollution, and enable predictive maintenance programmes.

Passenger-focused, these approaches will enhance the customer experience and improve accessibility, establishing 'data highways' for real-time information and better-informed long-term infrastructure planning.

Smart Health and Social Care

Providing a network of sensors in care homes to enable remote monitoring and the deployment of 5G technology to underpin remote health diagnosis – a pillar of the Government's new approach to accessible health care.

Alongside this, establishing a demonstrator 'Smart Hospital' enabled with 5G digital and data technology, and an in-work employee programme to boost workplace wellbeing and productivity.

Smart Energy Simulator

Creating a digital twin to maximise the outputs of pioneering West Midlands' Energy Capital work in real-time energy planning and predictive planning.

Regional Fibre Backbone

Using existing infrastructure assets and sensor network deployment opportunities to roll-out full fibre broadband to disadvantaged communities.

Data Store and Exchange

Collating and enriching data generated through the sensors and applications for long-term service, place and infrastructure planning, with potential commercialisation opportunities.

Sketch to Scale Programme

Building on WM5G's 5PRING innovation programme, providing comprehensive support to tech companies to maximise the opportunities offered from the Smart City Region initiative.

What We Hope to Achieve

- Reduction in congestion and emissions and increased reliability and use of public transport;
- Reduction in cancer and diabetes deaths; reduce avoidable referrals by 10%; capacity savings estimated at £60 million pa;
- 25% savings through demand optimisation and reduce systems costs by £60 million pa, in turn reducing fuel poverty;
- Provide broadband to 14,000 businesses, reduce digital poverty, and increase GVA by 1%-2%;
- Enriched data for more efficient service and infrastructure planning;
- New business creation, enhanced inward investment attraction, and increased GVA and skills levels;
- Catalyse £66 million of private sector investment (return of 1.5x on an initial public sector investment of £45 million).



The Challenge

The City of Wolverhampton is going through a period of significant transformation with new investment, new opportunities and new challenges.

The industrial heritage of the city is an asset to the local economy, but it has left a legacy of brownfield sites that present redevelopment challenges. Delivering new housing and employment land remains a priority.

Wolverhampton has one of the highest unemployment rates in England, with Universal Credit claimant levels at 7.7%, above the 5% West Midlands average, and youth unemployment is particularly significant.

The local business base is majority SME businesses and micro-enterprises, which are struggling with longstanding productivity issues, limiting the potential for growth and job creation.

Finally, due to a multitude of factors, life expectancy for men and women in Wolverhampton is below the England average.

The Prize

The scale of development, location and investor interest in the city provides real opportunities to create and retain additional wealth and growth. At the same time it will support our net zero transition and maintain competitiveness in the well-established manufacturing and construction supply chain.

New jobs and growing sectors in professional services, creative and digital and low carbon and environmental tech will provide significantly higher levels of overall growth and higher wages.

We will continue to raise skill levels, increase the employment rate with more local people in jobs, and promote the growth and innovation of the business base to drive productivity and deliver improved outcomes for residents.

Wolverhampton has the right local conditions to activate catalytic investment that enhances regional economic activity in the short term and delivers transformational regeneration in the long term.

Progress So Far...

Wolverhampton is now working in partnership with DLUHC to deliver its framework for levelling up — Our City: Our Plan. Wolverhampton was one of two places first identified with strong local leadership and ambition, where investment can be maximised to catalyse economic transformation. Key progress as part of and beyond this includes:

- Improving education, skills and employment including delivering our state of the art City Learning Quarter in the heart of the city centre;
- Addressing health inequalities including a Levelling Up Fund Round 2 bid for the Bilston health and regeneration programme which integrates health, care and wellbeing in the redevelopment of one of our most deprived communities;
- Ensuring a thriving economy, through development of a green innovation corridor to build on the city's position as the UK's national centre for sustainable construction (Levelling Up Fund Round 2 bid submitted for phase 1);
- A City Centre Regeneration Programme with 'ambitious Kings Cross-style regeneration projects' including aspirational, mixed-use city centre community living, alongside employment and leisure space;
- Capitalising upon being the proud home of the Department of Levelling Up, Communities and Housing.
- Supporting the University of Wolverhampton's £120 million development at Springfield by securing £14.9 million of funding for the world class National Brownfield Institute;
- Continued investment, including a completed phase 2 of the new train station and metro extension;
- This will support the development of the Wolverhampton to Walsall line, bringing total investment in the interchange area to £150 million;

- £25 million secured from Government's Towns Fund to transform the city centre, Bilston and Wednesfield.

Our Proposal

The proposals for deeper and increased devolution of powers and funding to the West Midlands will build on the work already being done to level up in Wolverhampton.

- Flexible powers and funding to invest in new and existing housing, commercial property, employment, and green space.
- This will enable wider regeneration and infrastructure improvements.
- Furthermore, coordinated retrofit investment and supply chain development will support the Three Cities retrofit programme which Wolverhampton is a part of.
- Regionally coordinated, locally delivered local area energy planning will support Wolverhampton in their data requirements for securing a heat network.
- Co-commissioned, locally tailored business support will focus on the significant productivity challenge facing businesses, further helping them to grow and thrive.
- Increased R&D investment via the Innovation Accelerator will also support Wolverhampton's green-tech innovation ambitions.
- Wolverhampton to Walsall Levelling Up Investment Zone, including the Green Innovation Corridor and linked double devolution of the Wolverhampton industrial decarbonisation hub (in master-planning).

Wolverhampton has been made a 'Levelling Up Place', one of 20 designated by Government to be part of a 'radical regeneration programme'.





Special Feature: The Role of Partnerships

The West Midlands Combined Authority is founded on 'partnership' — the seven metropolitan districts of the West Midlands collaborating to attract enhanced powers from central government to achieve better outcomes for the region.

In turn, the Combined Authority bridges between its partners in central government and its local authority colleagues, to ensure those powers are most effectively deployed.

It's also the foundation of government's proposed Trailblazer Devolution Deal approach — deepening devolution to maximise the collaborative partnerships at all levels of government and across an even wider set of actors.

Government

Through our Combined Authority Board, we're able to tackle the challenges and opportunities facing our diverse communities in the West Midlands. And our non-Constituent Authority partners provide invaluable input on cross-boundary issues, generating benefit across the wider region. This has underpinned rapid economic growth, an expanding transport network, and pioneering work to address social and cultural inequalities.

The way we've managed the development of our proposals has maximised those relationships. It's ensured that further devolution meets both government's levelling up missions, as well as the region's own strategic aims which have always sought to 'Level Up' — ensuring equality of opportunity, prosperity and wellbeing. By engaging with local government partners, both constituent and non-constituent authorities, our local MPs, and other government agencies, we have demonstrated to Whitehall officials and ministers that our proposals are relevant, deliverable, and supported.

Business

Our local businesses are crucial to the success of the region — economically, socially, and environmentally — and equally so to the success of our levelling up agenda. Whether it's through intermediaries, such as chambers of commerce and other membership organisations, or through structures established by the Mayor and Combined Authority, such as the Regional Business Council and Economic Impact Group, our business community has supported the development of our proposals.

This is not only important in ensuring the detail of the deal is informed by real-world economic pressures and opportunities, but it also establishes powerful routes for the delivery of projects and outcomes generated by the deal itself.

We'll struggle to deliver levelling up effectively if the region's economy is struggling, and employers can play such a big role in achieving the levelling up missions themselves — from workplace wellbeing to creating pride in place. This means our business community will continue to provide a powerful and crucial voice in our trailblazing deal.

“

As the Regional Business Council in the West Midlands, we are strongly supportive of the Government's levelling up agenda and trailblazing devolution deal approach — these will create tremendous opportunities it offers for our economy, businesses, and communities.

Liv Garfield, Chair of the WM Regional Business Council

”

Innovation, Skills & Universities

Trailblazing should be lighting a path for others to follow — finding new ways to deliver against existing challenges and building a more positive future for the region. Our local schools and colleges have been vital partners of the region's success, consistently preparing our young people for the world and helping our adult learning community.

This has drawn attention of national government, with the West Midlands recognised for its ability to meet the targets of its wide-ranging skills programmes.

Although the West Midlands region has, effectively, already embarked on an agenda of levelling up for many years now — tackling disparities within the region and between the West Midlands and other regions — innovation will be a vital catalyst to the levelling up missions of government.

Our university partners have already been a key part of the region's success and will be integral to ensuring our devolution proposals can be delivered. Whether that's through the development of new technologies, the research to underpin the region's strategic thinking, or through inspiring the next generation of innovators to develop the solutions to regional, and indeed, global, challenges.

Conclusion

Levelling up can only be achieved through all our communities realising their potential and through genuine partnership: enabling every partner to bring their own influence, voice, powers and resources to bear in a shared endeavour.

Our devolution proposals seek to enhance those local and regional powers to ensure that each partner in that joint venture realises the benefits and outcomes for their respective communities.



The Challenge

Despite several key strengths in the Black Country, including a robust industrial base and emerging clean and green tech sector, there are longstanding challenges in the region. We have made good progress, however, the Black Country still features pockets of the highest deprivation in the UK.

There is a need for increased housing provision, which must reflect the area's need in terms of the right tenure mix and a range of housing type of all residents. Levelling up for the Black Country means tackling these issues with a holistic set of strategic interventions and investments that delivers for people, places, and businesses.

Key challenges include:

- Dudley has below average qualification levels, with particular issues at level 4;
- Sandwell's proportion of residents with no qualifications is double the national average, with deprivation found across the borough;
- Walsall has below average levels of employment, higher levels of unemployment and inactivity than the UK average, and one of the highest proportions of youth claimants;
- A large proportion of the workforce is employed by SMEs, many of which struggle with historical productivity issues, reducing the potential for growth and local job creation.



The Prize

Levelling up the Black Country has the potential to have an unprecedented impact at a local, regional, and national level. Armed with the right skills and qualifications, and with better transport and digital connectivity, local people can access new and existing higher paid jobs in the area. This would ensure a lasting local benefit to inward investment and business growth.

Configuring the Black Country's current industrial base to be lower carbon, more sustainable, and more inclusive will enable the local economy to compete globally and make an increasing contribution to the GVA of the West Midlands, and the wider UK.



Progress So Far...

The four local authorities in the Black Country and the Black Country LEP, health and education partners have already made significant progress towards levelling up, including:

- Dudley is undergoing huge regeneration activity both within the Town Centre and across the wider borough, building on the investment opportunities brought about by the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension;
- Projects include the Black Country and Marches IOT, Very Light Rail Innovation Centre and the emerging University Campus at Castlehill;
- A new sixth-form college run by Eton College is also due to open in Dudley Town Centre in the next few years;
- Recently submitted Levelling Up Fund bids focus on further investment in education facilities across the borough as well as plans to provide much needed new residential accommodation;
- Sandwell are progressing several holistic schemes in the areas experiencing deprivation across the borough, including plans to provide new affordable housing in Tipton, new leisure facilities in Rowley Regis, land for new homes and schools in Smethwick and a new youth hub in West Bromwich East;
- Key focus in Walsall is town centre regeneration, breathing life into the economy through an ambitious programme for repurposing the high street, with step changes in the built environment, quality housing and cultural provision;
- There is also work to remediate significant employment sites to promote high value, well connected employment sites in the town;
- Walsall is also focusing on boosting educational attainment and qualification levels, having been named as one of the 55 Education Investment Areas across England.

Our Proposal

The series of devolution proposals that focus on the Black Country aim to bring investment in new resources, powers, and responsibilities to address the specific levelling up challenges of the Black Country.

- Going further and faster on housing, transport and skills will bring forward challenging sites for development, deliver key transport links such as the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill metro, and co-commission skills support to meet local needs;
- Providing funding to businesses will improve productivity and deliver new Industrial Decarbonisation Zones across the Black Country;
- These will be reinforced by the Net Zero proposals, which will provide funding and flexibility to retrofit homes and make the right changes in the energy system in the future;
- Productivity will also need to be boosted by development and provision of quality employment land;
- Following the Commonwealth Games, a cultural legacy fund and other cultural support will amplify the heritage assets, creative industries and grassroots cultural activities that exist in Black Country towns and cities, to create new jobs, attract tourism and increase pride in place.





Section C: Public Services & Pride In Place

Public Services & Pride In Place

We want our residents to feel proud of where they live and for them to be happy, healthy, well connected, and safe. We need to ensure that levelling up the West Midlands works towards this by going beyond those policy areas where we have seen devolution before, in our capacity as a trailblazer region. To drive change and create a more inclusive West Midlands we need new powers and funding to ensure that opportunities are available to all our residents. Our third set of Trailblazer Devolution Deal proposals are focused on the themes of:

- 1. Digital Inclusion**
- 2. Homelessness Prevention**
- 3. West Midlands Social Capital Resilience Fund**
- 4. Health**
- 5. Culture**
- 6. Crime, Community Safety and Resilience**
- 7. Climate Adaptation and the Natural Environment**

We want to reduce inequalities by helping residents get online through the provision of devices, data and digital skills so that they can access the opportunities that being digitally literate can unlock.

Building social capital and increasing opportunities for residents to engage in cultural activities locally will strengthen our local communities and build pride in place.

Our residents should feel safe and secure in their homes which is why we have proposals for new powers to help us prevent homelessness and enhance community safety as well as taking care of our natural environment.

Digital Inclusion



The Challenge

The West Midlands faces a huge challenge in providing as many residents and businesses as possible with access to reliable, quick broadband.

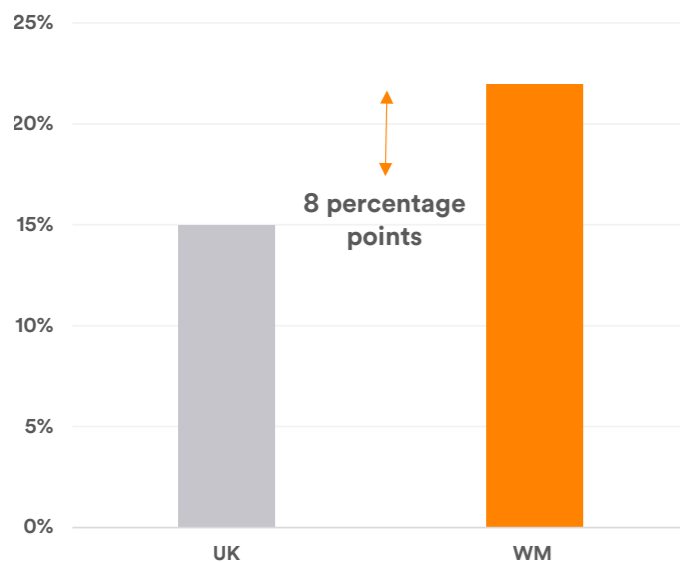
Nearly a quarter (22%) of West Midlands residents are 'non-users' who either do not use, or do not have access to the internet.

Another 23.3% are 'limited internet users', meaning nearly half of the West Midlands population have poor access to the internet.

The chart below shows that the proportion of non-users in the West Midlands (22%) is well above the UK average of 15%.

Over 526,000 people across WMCA 7 Met area have said that a lack of access to the internet limits their day-to-day activities — 158,000 of these live in one of the top 10% most deprived Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs).

Proportion of the population that are internet "non-users"



Internet access is not the only challenge facing the region — there is a digital skills shortage, with 56% of people saying they don't have the essential skills needed for work. That means that amongst UK regions, the West Midlands has the highest proportion of employers who say they find applicants with digital skills difficult to find (38%).

With 92% of employers saying they need their employees to have these essential digital skills, many people are shut out of employment opportunities.

The Prize

Levelling up digital inclusion will result in stronger employment and earnings progression for residents. Manual workers with essential digital skills can earn £2,160 more per year compared to those without these skills (Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2020).

This ability to earn more will result in greater resilience to cost of living pressures, along with having the skills to shop and pay bills on-line, which can result in substantial cost savings.

Improved access to public services such as welfare, transport, health, and council services will benefit residents, alongside potential reductions in the cost of providing these services.

Furthermore, reduction in isolation of older and other vulnerable people through greater connection with family and friends, and with essential services, will result in improved mental health.

Improved access to employment for residents through increased confidence to gain skills, look for work online, and secure employment will also benefit productivity among businesses through effective utilisation of these employees' newfound digital skills.

Levelling Up Mission

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By 2030, the UK will have nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population.

Progress So Far...

Digital Inclusion is a priority within the West Midlands Digital Road Map; the first of five missions is aimed at securing access for everyone, particularly those in poverty, to digital opportunities.

- The Digital Catch Up proposal was developed to address some of the challenges that have been exacerbated by COVID-19 and to support communities that are most likely to be digitally excluded, including the unemployed and those furthest away from the labour market, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities;
- Currently the WMCA is working with government to deliver Digital Skills Bootcamps, a project which was launched in the region and was rolled out more widely following its success;
- The WMCA also established the West Midlands Coalition for Digital Inclusion and Digital Skills Partnership for stakeholders across the region.

Our Proposal

- £4m Connected Services Fund to improve IT accessibility to help disadvantaged communities get online.
- A place-based targeted approach with a focus on 115 LSOAs across 61 wards that are in the lowest 10% (across the deprivation index for Income, Employment, Health, and Education) accounting for 23,063 residents.
- £3m Development Fund to manage monitor and evaluate seven pilots (1 per LA area) across the region focused on social housing /community hubs.
- Trialling and expanding the use of social tariffs to increase access to broadband.
- Developing a network of organisations (public, private and VCSE sector) across the region.
- WMCA would be accountable for commissioning, monitoring, and evaluating the approach to look to build a sustainable model.

What We Hope to Achieve

The £4 million Connected Services Fund would provide more than 23,000 people with data-enabled devices and help to start budgeting for data over the longer term by 2025.

This would allow residents to access essential online services such as benefits and healthcare, allowing them to shop online and connect with loved ones, and improve prospects by allowing them to access education and the online job market.

The digital champion model would provide peer-to-peer digital support, developing 150 digital champions contributing 70,000 hours of support over a 12-month period, bridging the gap between informal and formal training.



Homelessness Prevention



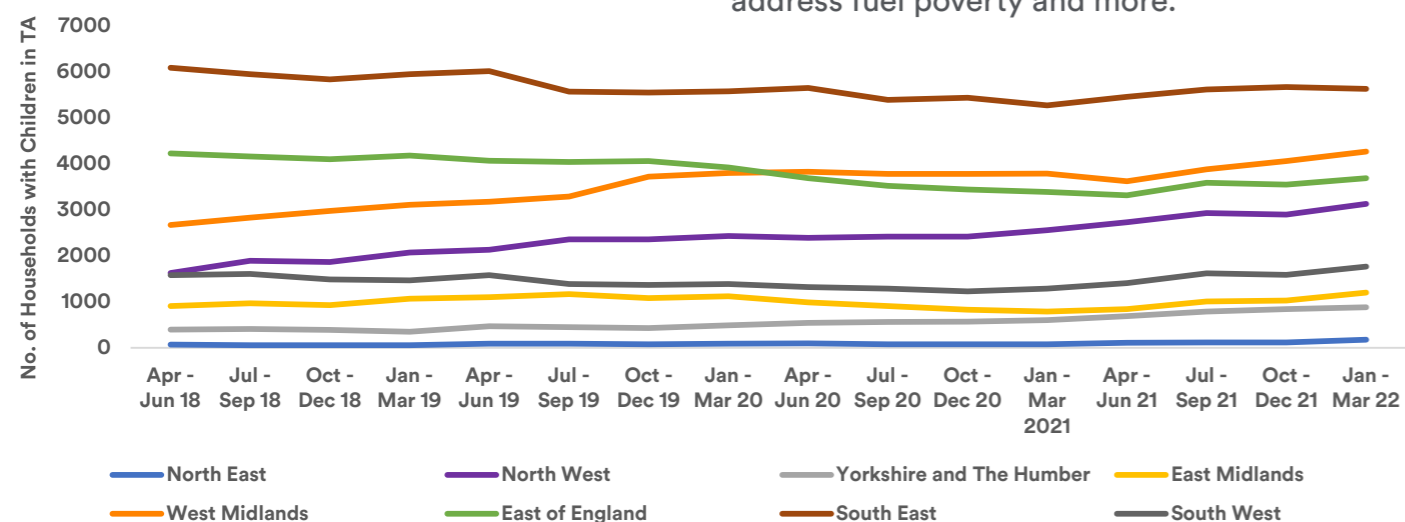
The Challenge

The rapid rise in exempt accommodation is of great concern in the West Midlands — with a lack of supply and no explicit funding for housing related support compounding the problem. There are an increasing number of providers who exploit the model to generate significant income, constituting low value-for-money for the taxpayer. The quality of many of these properties falls far below decent standards, putting tenants at risk and trapping some of our most vulnerable citizens in poor quality housing.

Young people without family support must grapple with the complexity of the welfare benefits system whilst struggling to ‘get on’ at work. Universal Credit for young people is currently below the official destitution level¹, while housing support entitlement in the private rented sector is at the shared accommodation rate. This complexity means that work often loses out to the greater fear of losing critical benefits.

Research by The Homelessness Taskforce in 2021 showed a total of 3,518 families with dependent children were living in temporary accommodation across the WMCA area.

Number of households with children in temporary accommodation across the England regions (excluding London):



The Prize

By designing out homelessness, we won't only transform the lives of those residents who our interventions will support, but also reduce the burden on the public purse, help to restore pride in place, and contribute to the local economy and community cohesion.

By working with local authorities and Government to develop, test, and iterate the proposed new regulatory environment, we can address unscrupulous providers and improve the quality of exempt supported accommodation.

In a Live and Work scheme, the rents are deflated below benefit levels so that tenants can pay their rent entirely from their earned income and be benefit free. We want them to be able to live, work, earn, and learn, as well as have a safe, affordable housing offer which enables that.

The Flexible Support Fund has tremendous potential to add value to other support measures. With greater flexibility it could provide the complementary ingredient to enable people to sustain their homes and make the changes necessary to find and keep employment, recognising that some have further to progress than others. This could include using the fund for our proposed Recovery Tenancy model, LHA plus model, address fuel poverty and more.

¹ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2020>

Levelling Up Mission

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By 2030, renters will have a secure path to ownership with the number of first-time buyers increasing in all areas; and the government's ambition is for the number of non-decent rented homes to have fallen by 50%, with the biggest improvements in the lowest performing areas.

Progress So Far...

- The WMCA Homelessness Taskforce was set up by the Mayor of the West Midlands and brings together all seven constituent local authorities, key public sector agencies, voluntary and community sector organisations and representation from the business community to tackle homelessness.
- The Homelessness Taskforce's central aim is to design out homelessness by identifying gaps in strategies, policies, procedures, laws, structures, systems and relationships that either cause or fail to prevent homelessness.
- It adds value to the work of our local It adds value to the work of our local authorities and wider partners, for example, it has accommodated over 500 people through its Housing First programme and over 1200 individuals have been supported through the WMCA Rough Sleeping Initiative.
- Birmingham was one of five Supported Housing Oversight Pilots which address the concentration of poor-quality accommodation in particular areas.
- The St Basils Live and Work scheme in Sandwell provides accommodation for young workers aged 16-24, for under £43 per week, without having to rely on welfare.

Our Proposal

- Improve non-commissioned exempt supported accommodation through a 'test' area, in which local authorities have more powers around enforcement and licensing to resolve issues. Requires redirecting current levels of spend on DWP housing benefit subsidy to a regional level;
- Replicate the Live and Work scheme trialled at St. Basil's in Sandwell in other areas through allowing the WMCA the powers and flexibility – notably on grant levels - to use the region's affordable housing programme to deliver more live and work housing;
- Optimise the DWP Flexible Support Fund by allowing WMCA to influence how it is prioritised and spent at the local level.

What We Hope to Achieve

- No families with children in temporary accommodation
- Increase in total affordable housing supply
- Reduced house price to income ratio
- Fewer people homeless or in low quality exempt accommodation



Social Capital

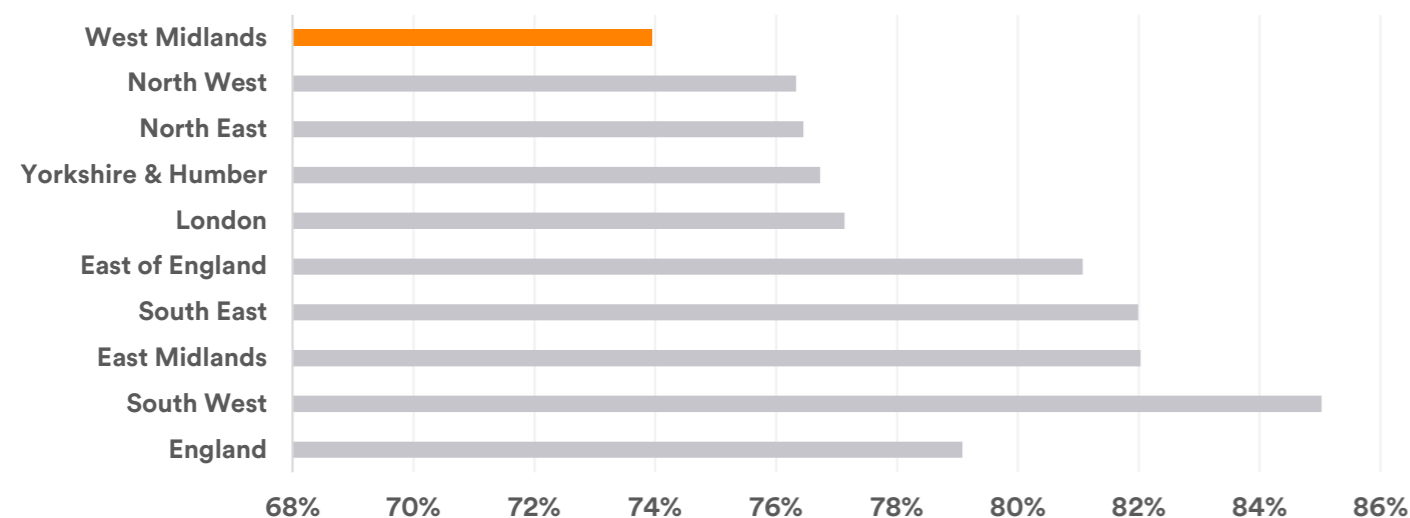


The Challenge

The pandemic has profoundly impacted our social capital, and in turn our social economy, leading to significant disparities within the region. This is particularly prevalent in the most economically excluded groups, such as ethnic minorities and those with low-paid jobs.

For example, one of the regional challenges is lower levels of satisfaction in their local area compared to other regions such as the South West. Across England, the West Midlands population was the least satisfied with their region, at 73.9%.

The ‘social economy’ draws on this supply of social capital to create businesses that provide economic fuel for these mutual benefits, which can be both social and environmental in nature.



Percentage of Adults Who Are Satisfied with their Local Area

Source: DCMS, Community Life Survey 2020/21

The Prize

The WMCA has an opportunity to use a fair share of the national Dormant Assets Fund to boost social capital. By investing into ‘left behind’ population groups and places, we can in turn boost pride in place and in doing so, grow the social economy across the region.

By adopting a ‘no one left behind’ philosophy, we can create greater inclusion within social capital and the social economy – the WMCA’s aim is to double the social economy within 10 years.

Progress So Far...

In 2021, WMCA developed a strategy to invest in the region’s social economy, entitled “Growing the social economy in the West Midlands”.

- These plans were developed in response to recommendations made by the Social Economy Taskforce, a group convened by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), to double the size of the social economy in ten years.
- It is estimated that HM Treasury will see between approximately £3.7 million and up to a maximum of £11.4 million over five years from our programme of tailored support.
- This will boost business skills and confidence to enable growth, representing significant fiscal value and value for money, whilst achieving a positive community and environmental impact.

Levelling Up Mission

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By 2030, pride in place, such as people’s satisfaction with their town centres and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.

Our Proposal

WMCA and partners will create the Social Capital Resilience Fund and focus on the following three areas:

Establishing a Community Wealth Fund for ‘left behind places’

- The Community Wealth Fund, led by Local Trust is a national proposal, supported at the regional level the Mayor of the WMCA and GMCA as well as our West Midlands local authorities;
- Its aim is to unlock ‘unclaimed assets’ for the creation of the Community Wealth Fund, enabling long-term investment and control of local investment to communities.

Powering the inclusion engine: ensuring that excluded population groups can benefit from, and contribute to, social capital

- This ask’s main priority is ensuring excluded groups can thrive and benefit and contribute to social capital using dormant assets. Priorities could be on distinct excluded groups;
- Universal Family Fund, investing in young people to enable the rights for all to live, work, learn and earn;
- Homelessness prevention through a devolved regional fund.

Gainshare for social economy growth

- WMCA’s first devolution deal grew a substantial capital programme from a gainshare arrangement with HM Treasury;
- This proposal suggests an amended version of that, either as a standalone or broader proposal, focused on delivering the growth ambitions and associated plans articulated in Growing the social economy in the WMCA area, and piloting the Power to Change-designed High Street Buyout Fund.

What We Hope to Achieve

- Boosting social capital whilst growing social economy by investment in ‘left behind’ groups.
- Delivery of wider positive social, economic, and environmental outcomes in line with the West Midlands Outcomes Framework, such as leading to increased revenue to treasury.
- Potential for local administration, grounded in the clusters where needed the most ensuring local solutions match priorities.
- Unlocking further the skills and confidence for social enterprise, cooperatives, and community businesses to grow.
- Providing a catalyst for reinvestment into specific programmes supporting the pathway to Net Zero.
- Enabling local and transformative investment in our High Streets, strengthening local economies, and enabling citizens the power and resources to create and grow high streets in their own vision.



Health Inequalities

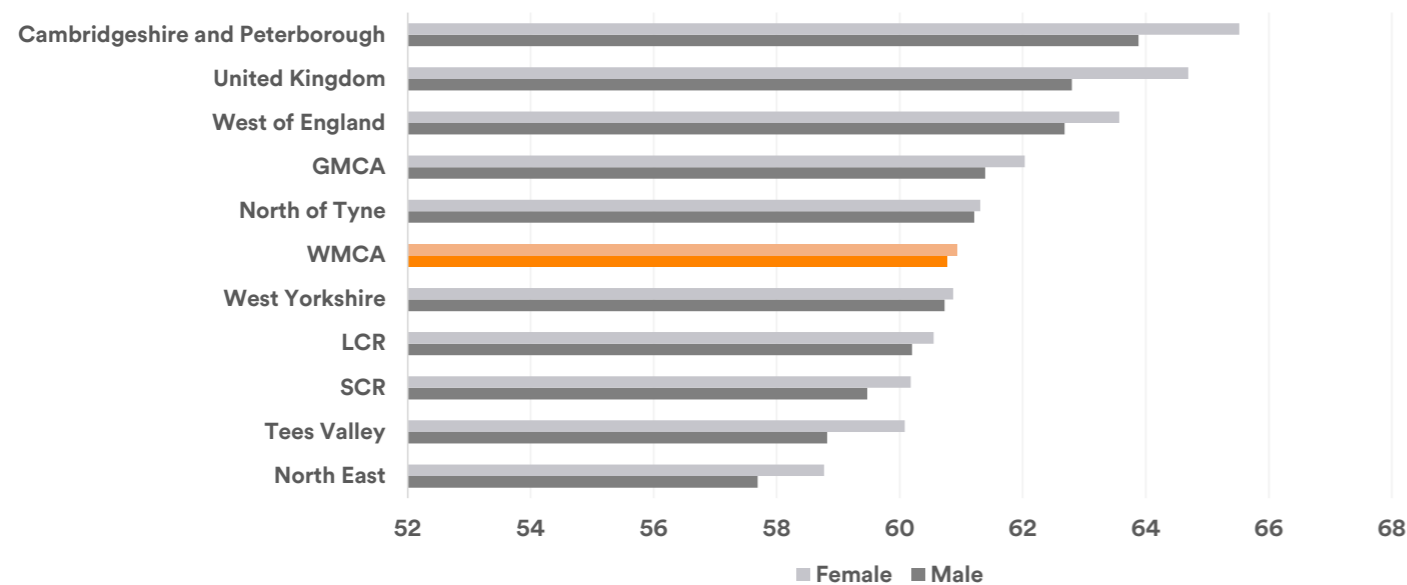


The Challenge

Health and wealth are two sides of the same coin. A weak economy, low wages, and poor educational outcomes are a recipe for poor health. Equally, an unhealthy, unhappy population is unlikely to drive economic productivity. So, tackling health inequalities in the region is fundamental to levelling up.

Across the West Midlands, both life expectancy and healthy life expectancy remain lower than the national average. The West Midlands Health of the Region report, published in response to the pandemic, showed this has been further exposed and exacerbated by Covid.

Years of Healthy Life Expectancy:



The Prize

A happier and healthier population which is more resilient to future pandemics, through adoption of a 'radical prevention' approach.

Radical prevention means acting as a whole system to tackle the underlying causes of poor health and health inequalities (the 'causes of the causes'). It moves us to a more person- and community-centred approach to health and wellbeing.

Radical prevention also involves demanding more inclusive economic growth which can reduce health inequalities. This can be done through:

- Improving access to employment
- Raising incomes
- Increasing community safety
- Improving housing quality and affordability
- Raising aspirations and improving educational outcomes
- Providing a high-quality local environment and green space
- Enhancing social relationships and connectedness
- Increasing opportunities for participation.

Levelling Up Mission

7/8

By 2030, the gap in Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) between local areas where it is highest and lowest will have narrowed, and by 2035 HLE will rise by five years.

By 2030, wellbeing will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.

Progress So Far...

While the WMCA doesn't have any devolved or statutory responsibilities for health, our Health and Wellbeing Board has overseen a range of programmes that have aimed to tackle regional health inequalities.

The Health of the Region report brought partners together from across the health system to make over 50 commitments aimed at improving health outcomes for ethnic minorities, tackling the wider determinants of health, and widening access to health and care services.

We have supported community-centred approaches to promoting physical activity, working closely with Sport England and with Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) on walking, cycling and other active community projects.

We have also developed the 'Include Me WM' programme to support disabled people to be more active. And through the 'Thrive Into Work' programme we have supported over 3,700 people with mental health challenges and disabilities into sustainable employment through Individual Placement Support (IPS).



Our Proposal

To continue to explore new ways for the WMCA to maximise its regional action to tackle health inequality and use its existing functions more effectively in improving poor health in areas such as planning consent for fast-food takeaways, tobacco prevention and engaging disabled people in physical activity;

To create a Radical Health Prevention Fund to unlock innovative, digital approaches to health prevention and become a national pathfinder for an electronic shared patient care record by integrating different types of data to enable more person-centred, holistic care;

To extend the devolution of the Work and Health IPS programme to new places and other cohorts of unemployed people, to develop an IPS Academy to train IPS advisers, and pilot new support for the voluntary sector workforce for prevention.

What We Hope to Achieve

- Reduce the size of the gap in healthy life expectancy between the West Midlands and the national average by 1.2 years by 2030.
- Reverse the downward trend in life satisfaction.
- Reduce the percentage of local wards where the exposure to PM 2.5 air pollution is above safe levels.

Culture



The Challenge

The West Midlands holds some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country — 49% of neighbourhoods are in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods of the Index of Multiple Deprivation. This correlates with low levels of participation in publicly funded arts and culture, due to lack of choice and opportunity.

Our West Midlands Cultural Sector Research project found that over 50% (1.2 million) of people in the region have very limited access to publicly funded cultural facilities, and therefore have a very limited choice in terms of taking part in cultural activities — in some areas this was as high as 71%.

These areas often have low levels of existing cultural infrastructure and have not benefited from public support for arts and culture in the past, meaning that nearly 2 million people are missing out on the positive benefits of culture.

The Prize

We've recently hosted several major cultural events including the 2022 Commonwealth Games and Coventry UK City of Culture. Investment into these activities has given us the platform to create a legacy and restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging — as well as boost the attractiveness of the region for private investment and growth.



Progress So Far...

The Birmingham 2022 Festival, one of the largest ever cultural programmes to surround the Commonwealth Games, saw the region's creativity and diversity celebrated across nine incredible festival sites and over 200 events, showcasing dance, music, workshops, parties and more.

Likewise, Coventry's year as UK City of Culture will leave a lasting impact on both the city and the region, with figures showing that live and online audiences of just over one million experienced more than 700 events.

Furthermore, the WMCA already has a demonstrable track record in supporting cultural sector-specific initiatives, as well as creative industries through the work with Create Central and the successful delivery of the Government's Creative Scale Up Programme pilot.



It is essential that we build on the investment already made to the major cultural events in the West Midlands to ensure the learning & opportunities can be shared across the region. Whilst our region has a rich and diverse cultural heritage, opportunities to engage are currently not equitable which means people are missing out on the benefits that arts & culture can provide including wellbeing, volunteering, skills development and pride of place. Arts, culture and heritage must play a key role in how we level up our places
Martin Sutherland OBE, Chair of the WMCA Cultural Leadership Board



Levelling Up Mission

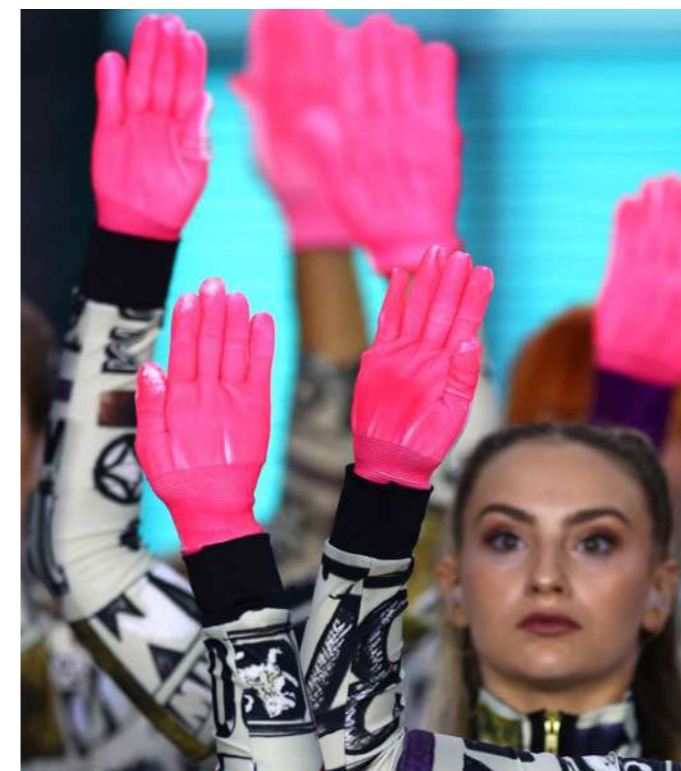
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By 2030, pride in place, such as people's satisfaction with their town centres and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.

Our Proposal

The creation of a £15 million WM Levelling Up Culture Legacy Fund — giving us the best possible opportunity to deliver the 'Pride of Place' levelling up mission. The key parts of this fund are:

- The West Midlands Culture and Place Programme — working together with regional and national stakeholders to create a clear regional vision, and a delivery plan to ensure we achieve a lasting legacy from major cultural events;
- The Cultural Infrastructure Development Programme — developing a strategic pipeline of key cultural and heritage projects, as well as helping projects with pre-planning and feasibility, so they can then be put forward for larger investment opportunities;
- Cultural corridors/action zones as geographically defined areas in which investment is aimed to deliver culture/heritage-led regeneration and social value outcomes.



What We Hope to Achieve

If there is investment to cement their legacy, major cultural events have the potential to be transformational projects.

The West Midlands Levelling Up Culture Legacy Fund is therefore key to unlocking the wider regional benefits and ensuring that our residents can feel proud of where they live and have opportunities to engage with culture and lead fulfilling lives. Outcomes include:

- Increased social capital;
- Improved social cohesion, measured by the percentage of adults who agree that their local area (regional) is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, in line with the WM Outcomes Framework;
- Improved personal wellbeing in life satisfaction, in line with the WM Outcomes Framework;
- Increased pride in place and civic participation, in line with the WM Outcomes Framework;
- Increased and better measured cultural engagement;
- Bringing underused spaces and buildings back to life;
- Increased footfall in town centres;
- Enhanced local place economies, including growth of creative and cultural businesses associated with good quality training and employment opportunities;
- More resilient and connected local cultural ecologies.



Crime, Community Safety and Resilience



The Challenge

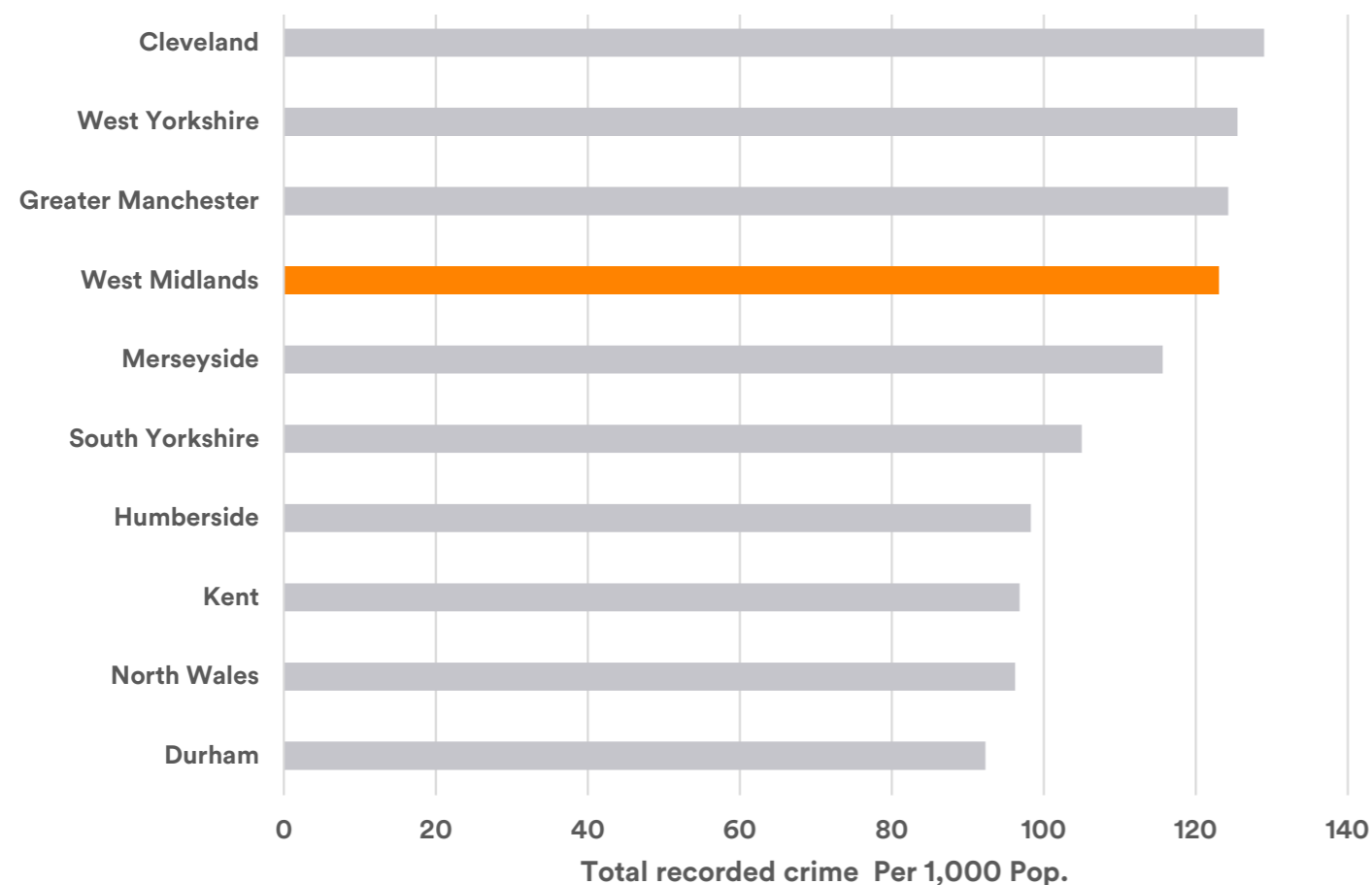
High deprivation levels in the region are a key cause of offending, with the West Midlands Police having the highest crime severity score of all forces in England and Wales. The West Midlands also has a much higher rate of domestic abuse-related incidents, with 26 incidences per 1,000 of the population.

The Prize

We're aiming to create a better connected and collaborative criminal justice and rehabilitation system, geared towards the needs of regional communities, and one which tackles immediate and long-term criminality issues.

Alongside this, we will address the disparities in opportunity and fairness that are faced by some of our deprived communities, increasing positive economic activity and life chances.

Total Recorded Crime per 1,000 Population - Top 10 Places:



Levelling Up Mission

11

Focused on reducing homicide, serious violence and neighbourhood crime. Our proposals will also act as a key enabler in fulfilling the broader set of community and economic missions through, for example, enabling more young people to engage in education, training or employment rather than offending.

Our Proposal

Our proposals will deliver both immediate and generational levelling up of the West Midlands – targeting historical inequalities, in a region with an ambition to ensure that a person's ethnic background is never an obstacle.

Through targeting these two key areas we are confident that we can work towards both addressing the immediate issues of criminality in the West Midlands, and address future criminality by better supporting young people.

Leadership within the criminal justice system.

- Create a local system of mutual accountability through priority and target setting and improved evidence-based decision-making.
- This will include a 'duty' on Criminal Justice partners to collaborate on strategic and delivery plan development and sign-off and share data.
- Alongside this, the Police and Crime Commissioner would hold a stronger role in the criminal justice system with involvement in senior level appointments.
- They would also have the power to 'call-in' decisions by Criminal Justice partners, have control over devolved funding for rape victims and violence against women programmes, and retention of fixed penalty fines and profits from crime;
- Enhanced regional powers would be devolved for health partners to have responsibility over secure facilities, offender skills, health and resettlement and drug safety testing.

Supporting young people and breaking the cycle of criminality.

- We want to meet the needs of children and young people as early as we can through ensuring robust early help support;
- Divert young people away from the criminal justice system and allowing them to flourish in their future lives. We would achieve this through:
- A new Local Authority 18-25 offending prevention programme based on the success of the Youth Offending Service model;
- Enhanced powers for the Youth Justice Board;
- Regional pathfinders on referral mechanisms and alternatives to custodial sentences.

What We Hope to Achieve

Through redesigning and redrawing the regional relationships which currently lead to dispersed, complex and disconnected outcomes, we will be able to:

- Increase accountability for outcomes which is comprehensive, complementary, and rooted in the needs of the region's diverse local communities;
- Reduce in the flow of people entering the criminal justice system, particularly among children and young people;
- Reduce the time victims have to wait to see offenders brought to justice;
- Enhance rehabilitation of offenders, particularly those starting out in life, thus avoiding constant 'recycling' through the criminal justice system.

Climate Adaptation and the Natural Environment



The Challenge

The UK heatwave of July 2022 was a stark reminder of the need for us to ensure we are better prepared for climate change. It highlighted the importance of the natural environment and nature recovery in addressing this challenge.

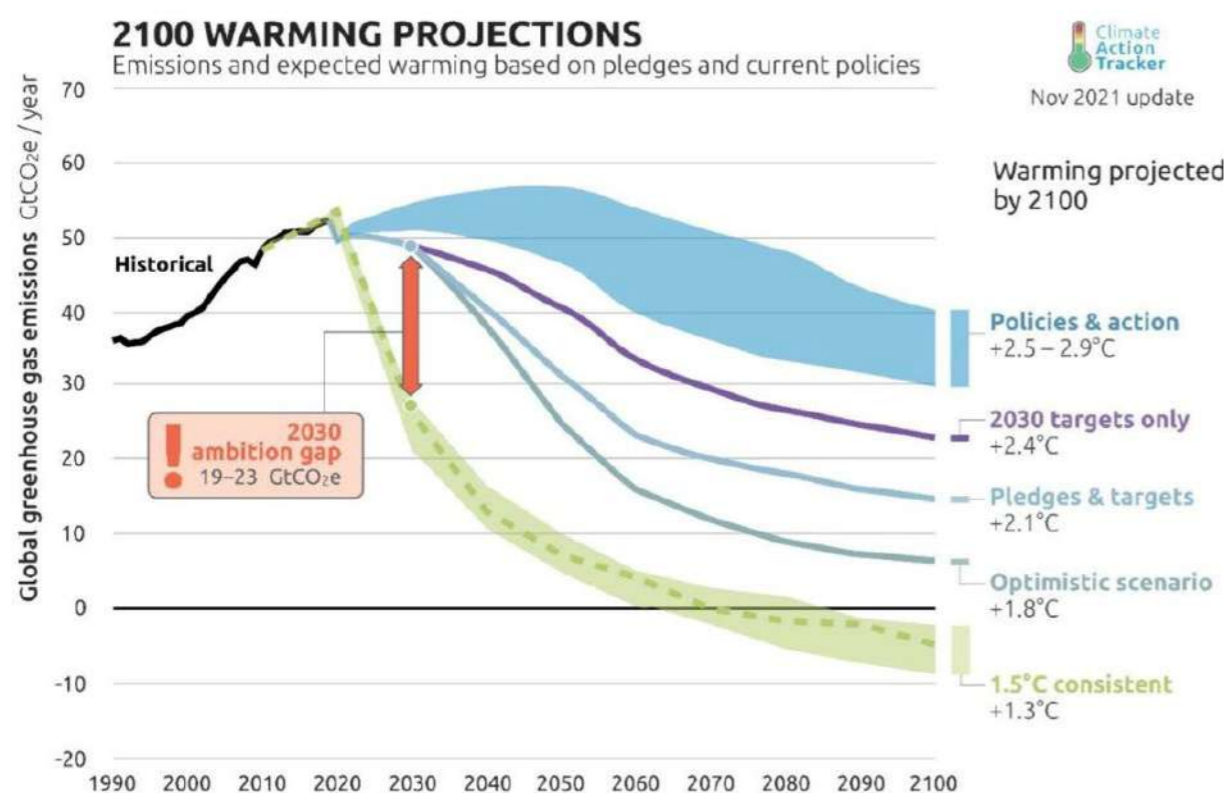
Annual temperatures are on the rise — in the West Midlands alone, we're forecasted to experience a rise of 1.2°C by the 2050s, and between 1.3 and 2.4°C by the 2080s. Of course, this is dependent on global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions between now and then, but it's a worrying picture nonetheless.

Risks associated with rising temperatures, such as more extreme heatwave events causing impacts on people's health and wellbeing, are likely become more prevalent. Winter rainfall is expected to increase by approximately 6% by the 2050s and by between 9% to 14% by the 2080s. Conversely, summer rainfall is expected to decrease by approximately 15% by the 2050s and by between 19% to 26% by the 2080s.

The Prize

Many investments do not generate a traditional financial return, but indirectly they deliver a range of benefits which address the levelling up challenge. This includes:

- Saved lives and damage costs avoided;
- Significant economic benefits through new jobs, skills, innovation, and infrastructure;
- Broader social, environmental, and governance benefits;
- In adaptation terms, these are together referred to as the 'triple dividend of resilience' and underpin the 2019 report of the Global Commission on Adaptation which stated that globally, the rate of return on adaptation ranges from \$2-10 for every \$1 investment.



Progress So Far...

In 2021, the WMCA launched its first Natural Environment Plan with four priorities:

- Widening access to green and blue spaces for all communities across the West Midlands, initially focusing on places where there is a deficit of access;
- Increasing tree and hedgerow planting, but with an emphasis on 'right tree, right place', to support climate mitigation and adaptation;
- Promoting wildlife corridors and working with natural corridors (both green and blue) as well as those linked to infrastructure projects, e.g. along cycle ways;
- Recognising the importance of the enablers of change and supporting activity around financing and behaviour change that will enable the roll out, impact and scalability of the initiatives identified in the plan.

Since its launch, we have developed an online platform to encourage and support tree planting across the region. The WM Virtual Forest has now registered over 250,000 trees, and the WMCA has worked with partners, including Severn Trent Water as part of their Commonwealth Forest initiative.

We have also developed a £750,000 Community Green Grants programme to distribute small grants to community organisations to provide better access to green spaces.

The WMCA is currently producing its own adaptation plan, working alongside other relevant regional stakeholders, to begin to understand more about regional coordination and work required to ensure adaptation is embedded within decision making.

Our Proposal

- Establish the West Midlands as a 'Pathfinder' for Regional Adaptation Plans. WMCA would be able to support government in the development and delivery of its National Adaptation Plan by bridging between government departments, and local authorities, resilience forums, universities and communities.
- The pathfinder would provide first-hand insights into the challenges of adaptation and the increasing knowledge in tackling those.
- Support community groups in areas of high vulnerability to adapt to extreme weather events – working with Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) to develop practical solutions at a neighbourhood scale.
- Establish a WM Natural Environment Investment Fund – providing pathfinder funding as a catalyst to private sector investment to examine in detail the potential range of funding mechanisms that could be used to protect, restore, and enhance natural capital at a regional scale.

What We Hope to Achieve

- An evidence base on the likely impacts from various adaptation approaches, including community engagement responses.
- Increased awareness of climate change and the capacity to respond accordingly.
- Practical measures to build community resilience to extreme weather events.
- Credible standards for private sector investment into natural environment projects.
- Delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain targets and Nature Based Services.

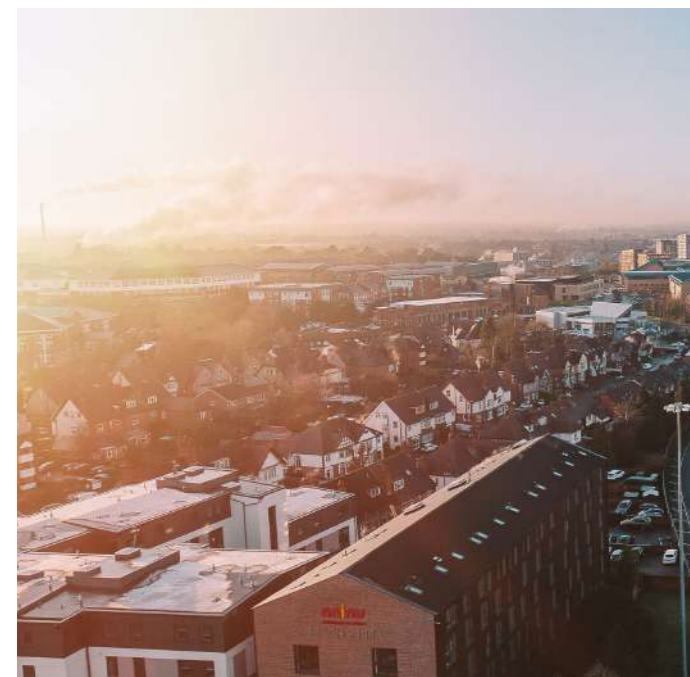


The Challenge

Coventry and the neighbouring county of Warwickshire form a single functional economic geography which was the fastest growing local economy in England between 2008 and 2017. Coventry and Warwickshire also share a single Integrated Health and Care System. Since 2017, there has been slowing economic growth, exacerbated by the pandemic and subsequent global supply chain disruption, along with challenges associated with inflation and price increases.

Despite these challenges, Coventry and Warwickshire has been the focus of national attention — not only has it held numerous international sports events, but Coventry's status as the UK City of Culture has catapulted the area into the national conversation.

Levelling up across Coventry and Warwickshire is about seizing the moment and capitalising on these opportunities, reducing inequalities and ensuring all residents across the patch can benefit from exciting new growth and investment. Whilst this plan focuses on the Metropolitan Areas, we will seek to work with other devolution deals which will enhance this economic area.



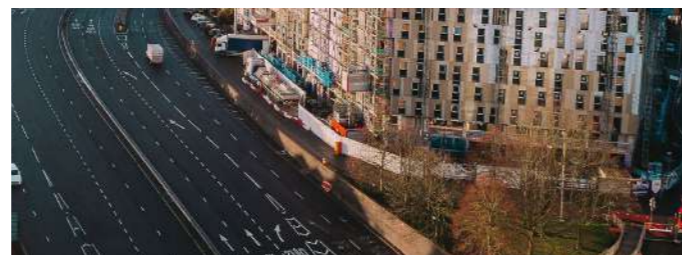
The Prize

Levelling up Coventry and Warwickshire will mean that we can create good quality jobs for local people, as well as giving them pride in place. By upskilling local people, Coventry has the potential to be at the forefront of the UK's sustained economic recovery from the combined impact of events in the last few years, notably through building on the city's longstanding legacy of innovation through smart mobility, culture and creativity, and modern services. We're proposing a significant programme of activity over the coming years to ensure these outcomes are achieved.

Coventry City Council's One Coventry Plan 2022 - 2030 sets out an ambitious approach to public service delivery and reform. The lives of all those who live, work or study in the city will be improved by continuing to work with residents, communities, and partners to understand where the biggest positive difference can be made, and how this can be achieved together.

In Warwickshire, the six Councils each have ambitious plans for growth, underpinned by a countywide approach to levelling up in Warwickshire, which focuses on social mobility, inequality, sustainable futures and community power.

The One Coventry vision aims to deliver services from and with communities, empowering residents to shape local public services. Economic and skills growth coupled with community engagement will create a civic society environment focussed on delivering the needs of residents, students, and the local workforce.



Progress So Far...

Coventry has already made significant strides towards addressing local levelling up challenges. It works in partnership with Warwickshire and other partners to ensure aligned benefits for those that move in and out of the City to neighbouring areas for work, and joined-up approaches to issues including economic growth and health and social care. Key examples in Coventry include:

- The Coventry Job Shop and partners across the City successfully connects communities to local businesses — employers get the right people to be successful and grow, and residents are supported into the best opportunities;
- This includes residents furthest from the labour market and the most vulnerable;
- Coventry's Education Partnership has contributed towards transforming outcomes for children and young people, with 93% of primary children attending good or outstanding schools;
- The city has also been selected as an Education Investment Area;
- Developments at Friargate and City Centre South have been agreed and will create new job opportunities and new homes, as well as new hotel and retail and leisure space;
- Coventry is at forefront of pioneering new green transport concepts such as being the UK's first All Electric Bus city, the development of a new Very Light Rail system and hosting the world's first Urban Airport trial;
- Coventry's Children's Service have recently received recognition for the transformation following an Ofsted inspection, achieving a rating of Good;
- The introduction of joint health and social care provision is leading to improved operating practices for staff;
- These include the introduction of the Integrated Care Record and the development of Population Health Management (PHM);

- We've developed two bids to the Levelling Up Fund to regenerate two of the city's most deprived areas, Foleshill and Hillfields. The City Centre Cultural Gateway Levelling Up Fund bid will be the next step for enhancing the city's cultural assets, as well as supporting the growth of the creative economy to realise the City of Culture Legacy.

Our Proposal

The Trailblazer Devolution Deal proposals will be delivered in alignment and close collaboration with partners in Warwickshire and beyond, in recognition of the interconnected nature of our economies and health and social care systems:

- Going further and faster on housing will support Coventry to unlock brownfield sites for development and regenerate key sites such as Spon End.
- This will be reinforced by the Net Zero proposals, which will provide funding and flexibility to retrofit homes, with locally tailored skills support further strengthening the local market.
- The proposed transport sandbox will see us take a leading role in bringing forward and rolling out homegrown transport technology.
- This will be bolstered by new approaches to increase R&D funding, focusing on key sites such as Silicon Spa, WMG along with the universities of Coventry and Warwick.
- It's also crucial to sustain and enhance the area's first-class business support ecosystem to help businesses grow across a number of sectors.
- Progressing the Gigafactory within the South Coventry - Warwick Innovation Corridor would be one of the most important catalysts for modernising and growing the UK automotive supply chain.



Fundamental	Climate Resilience	Affordable and Safe Places	Connected Communities	Education and Learning
Indicators	Reduce Carbon Dioxide Emissions (ktCO ₂)	No Families with Children in Temporary Accommodation	Percentage of WM population able to access 3 strategic centres in 45 minutes by public transport in the AM peak	Increase Funded Early Education for 2 Year Olds
	Reduce the Number of Households in Fuel Poverty	Increase the Total affordable housing supply - Completions	Proportion of WM population within 15 minutes of key services/amenities centres accessible without a car	Increase % of those aged 16-18 in Sustained Education, Apprenticeship or Employment
	Increase Renewable Energy Generation (after consumption)	Decrease the Number of Crimes Recorded per 1,000 of the Population	Car versus non-car mode share by vkm and trips	Decrease Residents aged 25-39 years old with NVQ2 Quals and Below

Fundamental	Health and Wellbeing	Equality	Inclusive Economy	Power, Influence and Participation
Indicators	Reduce Size of Gap in Healthy Life Expectancy to National – Females & Males (years)	Reduce Percentage of population living under Living Wage Foundation rates (Full-Time)	Increase GVA in Transformational Sectors	Increase Turnout in Local and Regional Elections
	Percentage of Wards where Population Weighted Exposure to PM2.5 is greater than 10µg/m ³	Economic inactivity	Increase Enterprise Births to Deaths Ratio	Increase Civic Participation
	Improve Personal Wellbeing - Life Satisfaction	Women in leadership/ethnic owned businesses	Increase Jobs in Transformational Sectors	Increase the Percentage of Adults who Agree it is Important to be able to Influence Decisions in their Area



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**