

Question Time responses

The following questions were submitted for the LEP 'Question Time' session which was held at the AGM meeting on 3 September. In total, 9 questions were submitted.

A representative sample of questions were answered at the session on 3 September. Questions submitted in the lead-up to the AGM have been answered in the below table. Where responses are currently unavailable, an updated version of this document will be produced.

Key themes of the questions were:

- Economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic
- Skills development
- Business growth and job creation
- Climate change and the green economy

*For transparency questions have been kept in their original verbatim format.

No.	Question	Answer
1.	#AsktheLEP please explain how city region growth is helped by hoovering up jobs from eg HMRC into Leeds city centre rather than investing eg in Shipley?	<p>The decision to move HMRC jobs from Bradford to Leeds was made by Government, not the LEP. We want to see more Government jobs moved to the region from London. This will benefit the country as a whole to have a more diverse range of perspectives shaping and delivering policies and Government services.</p> <p>As the current situation shows, more than ever before, Government jobs do not need to be in London. There is an opportunity to move jobs to West Yorkshire, create opportunity, and take advantage of the talent that we have here.</p> <p>We know that Government is exploring moving jobs to the region – and we are engaging with Ministers on this very issue. The LEP works hard to make the case to prospective investors or Government about why West Yorkshire and Leeds City Region are an attractive place to live, work and invest.</p> <p>We want to see inward investment in every part of the region. That's why we've set ourselves targets in relation to generating inward investment leads and securing investment in all parts of the region as well</p>

		<p>as the core city of Leeds – which has seen record concentration of Foreign Direct Investment.</p> <p>On the specific - Whitehall Place where the Government Hub is located represents a positive development for Leeds and has totally transformed that part of Leeds City Centre. The development has provided much needed modern office space which now hosts the HQ of some of the region's largest legal and tech firms.</p>
2.	<p>While the reviews are taking place on the way audits have been abused by the big four auditing firms. Why should the public sector be audited by the public sector, as a member of the combined authority we have enough auditors across west Yorkshire to carry out the work under the localism act and the devolution agenda for us to carry out the audits required by a team of local professional auditors from across the combined authorities</p>	<p>External audit arrangements are governed by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and at present appointments are determined by Public Sector Audit Appointments.</p> <p>Auditors are publicly procured by PSAA on a regional basis and a range of firms are appointed and then assigned to specific organisations.</p> <p>The LEP and Combined Authority ensure they comply with all audit regulations.</p>
3.	<p>BUISNESS RATES REFORM LOCAL COUNCILS SETTING ASIDE MILLIONS OF POUNDS FOR APPEALS WHERE FINANCE COULD BE USED FOR S M Es there has to be a better way of dealing with this dead money the latter pooling arrangements would have benefited Leeds City Council by having 10 million to promote businesses placing it back in to the system what is the view of the panel on business rates retention?</p>	<p>The pooling arrangements that have been put in place in recent years have seen business rates increases kept in the region. The future of the business rates system is under review by Government and as a LEP we would support a system which improved the funding available to be determined locally.</p>

<p>4.</p>	<p>WOULD THE PANEL AGREE THAT TO ENGAGE PEOPLE IN HAVING THEIR OWN BASIC INCOME INSTEAD OF THE PRESENT D W P BENEFIT SYSTEM THAT CAUSES POVERTY WITH SANCTIONS AND HARD SHIP TO BE ABLE TO BUY THEIR OWN FOOD AND PAY THEIR RENTS BE EMPLOYABLE WITHOUT THE STIGMA OF CLAIMING BENIFITS ,APPLYING THE BASIC INCOME TO ALL PEOPLE COULD PREVENT POVERTY EVEN THE BUISNESS PEOPLE SUPPORT THIS AS THEY ARE NOT DISCRIMINATED AGAINST THIS NEW WAY OF THINKING</p>	<p>The LEP is supportive of much greater devolution from Whitehall to the region, including over public finances. Local consideration could then be given to assessing how this resource could be used to implement various ideas aimed at reducing poverty and inequality in support of our ambition to deliver more inclusive growth.</p> <p>All ideas, such as for a universal basic income which could replace the existing benefits system, would need to be considered not just against the benefits outlined in the question, but also their affordability and overall value for money.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>As a Sixth Form teacher, I have not only my (economic) interests in mind, but my students as well. How much can I reassure them that the current economic situation in Yorkshire is robust enough to withstand the potential dual threats of a post-Brexit and post-COVID Britain, and what plans are there to secure against either or both of these threats?</p>	<p>West Yorkshire has a comparatively resilient economy due to its diversity – it's the region that most closely matches the UK economy as a whole.</p> <p>The LEP has taken steps over the last decade to build economic resilience, including delivering the country's biggest growth deal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ created 5,500 jobs and safeguarded a further 22,000 ○ invested over £79m of grants and loans in new, world-class college facilities. ○ supported over 14,800 businesses to grow and become more productive ○ invested nearly £49m into businesses across the region ○ supported over 3,000 apprenticeships. <p>Last year, in the run-up to leaving the EU, the LEP worked to ensure businesses had the information</p>

		<p>and support needed to help them prepare for a potential unplanned exit.</p> <p>As the Government negotiations with the EU over our future economic relationship progress, we will do what we can to support businesses to have access to support to reshape their business to make the most of future opportunities.</p> <p>The appointment of our Chair, Roger Marsh OBE DL, to the investment trade advisory group set up by the Department for International Trade will focus on attracting inward investment from overseas.</p> <p>But as we set out in our letter to the Chancellor, the potential threat to the West Yorkshire economy from the Covid-19 crisis could lead to 58,000 job losses in the next year, unemployment rate rising to 14 per cent, reduce value of economy by £12bn.</p> <p>That is why the West Yorkshire Economic Recovery Plan which has had input from LEP Board members and Panels has been developed to safeguard jobs and invest in the skills and infrastructure that will allow us to grasp future opportunities.</p> <p>Working in partnership between the public and private sectors will be crucial and we are calling on Government to work with us to implement this plan.</p>
6.	As a Wakefield resident, how has the LEP helped to secure investment and development in the city - and what are future plans for the Merrie City?	<p>To support investment in the district of Wakefield, in the last 12 months, we have approved 77 grants to businesses with a value of £1.12m. We have generated business investment of £7.3m that will lead to over 170 new jobs.</p> <p>Our Enterprise Zones Programmes is investing in two sites in Wakefield - South Kirkby Business Park and Langthwaite Business Park Extension (also in South Kirkby) to make space for commercial units.</p> <p>Wakefield will also benefit from £1.9m in funding as part of the Getting Building Fund which includes funding for Wakefield Warm Homes Fund, Business gigabit voucher scheme and the Knottingley Skills, Business and Services Hub.</p>

		<p>On transport, our Transforming Cities Fund has £31.5m of funding to projects in Wakefield, including a £13.6m sustainable package for Wakefield City Centre.</p> <p>Through the West Yorkshire Transport Fund, we have already delivered 5 projects totalling £49.5m, which includes £37m for the Wakefield Eastern Relief Road. There are 6 more transport improvement projects in process in Wakefield for a total of £25.5m.</p> <p>Through the Cycle City Ambition Grant, we are funding £3m towards the Castleford to Wakefield Greenway to support active travel initiatives.</p>
7.	What is the LEP doing to strengthen skills in the region in a post covid economy?	<p>Our Economic Recovery Plan sets out the longer-term planning for economic recovery. Includes employment and skills priorities for the region including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Employment brokerage for young people (through the Employment Hub model) ○ Enterprise skills and ○ Adult retraining and upskilling offer. <p>We don't have all the levers and funding we need. Our Future-Ready Skills Commission is making the case for greater devolution of skills investment and powers to local areas to benefit individuals, businesses and regional economies.</p> <p>The Commission is due to publish its final report later this month, including specific recommendations on how skills should be prioritised as a critical part of our economic recovery from COVID-19.</p>
8.	How is the LEP helping people who have been made redundant through the pandemic learn the skills needed for so-called green jobs so we can create a future-proof economy within the region?	<p>Our Employment Hub programme offers local support for individuals who are made redundant. The support available includes CV writing, helping with job applications and identifying opportunities to reskill via our wide range of local FE colleges, universities and independent training providers along with our own free [re]boot programmes.</p>

		<p>Our Economic Recovery Plan includes a £10m proposal for a Towards Net Zero Carbon Skills programme to support the low carbon pipeline (including Just Transition) and the wider plans to tackle the climate emergency, with a 'Workforce Fund' pilot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Address locally identified skills gaps; supporting employers to recruit to hard to fill vacancies requiring specialist STEM skills ○ Improve engagement between employers and training providers; building capacity to co-design & co-deliver training which can be sustainable ○ Support West Yorkshire residents to enter/retrain into skilled digital jobs and progress their careers through gaining good quality work <p>Net zero carbon proposals that LEP has previously endorsed have the potential to create at least 70,000 jobs over the coming years.</p>
9.	<p>How does the LEP plan to support the regions recovery from the COVID-19 and how will it ensure that the economy is more resilient for the future?</p>	<p>We are already working hard to support recovery by providing financial and advisory support to businesses; supporting individuals who have lost their jobs by linking them to employers and continuing to develop inward investment opportunities.</p> <p>We need further investment from Government. Through the West Yorkshire Economic Recovery Board, which brings together civic, business, trade union, health and third sectors, we have outlined in our asks and offers to Government a targeted approach totalling £1.4bn, including to four distinctive investment propositions totalling £750m that take advantage of the strengths of the West Yorkshire economy and its people, with the potential to make a major contribution to the national recovery. These propositions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● build on our region’s world-leading position in health innovation,

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maximise our capabilities as the UK's fastest-growing centre for digital, • have the potential to create up to 70,000 jobs and opportunities by becoming a net zero carbon economy by 2038, and • capitalise on our reputation as a great place to start a business, by providing large-scale programmes of support for entrepreneurs. <p>The package of investment focuses on supporting jobs for people in resilient businesses, on helping people get the skills they need to get jobs, and on the infrastructure, people need to access opportunities. This wider work contributes to a plan to increase our region's productivity in line with the UK average which could add £8.5 billion to the UK economy.</p>
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