

LEP Question Time

Responses 2021

The following questions were submitted for the LEP 'Question Time' session which was held at the AGM meeting on 9 June. In total, 16 questions were submitted.

A representative sample of questions were answered at the session on 9 June.

Questions submitted in the lead-up to the AGM have been answered in the below table.

Key themes of the questions were:

- Economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic
- Equality and diversity
- Skills

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

Question	Answer
<p>How have LEP implemented Equally, Diversity and Inclusion on its Board in its Staff and its grants distribution?</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. The LEP is committed to achieving diversity and equality of opportunity in everything we do. The current LEP Board is the most diverse we've ever had, with members from a variety of backgrounds in the private sector, including the arts, social enterprise, academia and management consulting.</p> <p>With a total of 18 members, 13 members of the Board are from the private sector and five from the public sector, with equal numbers of men and women. Our latest recruitment campaign for LEP Board members was specifically aimed at ensuring we appointed members from diverse backgrounds that would be representative of the City Region economy.</p> <p>The LEP also has a Diversity Champion who leads on ensuring diversity and inclusion is part of all key decisions. Eligibility for Grants varies and is often restricted by criteria set by the Government. To aid transparency details of funded projects are available on our website.</p> <p>In terms of LEP and Combined Authority staff we have implemented the following:</p> <p>Recruitment and training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed and refreshed recruitment processes which have now been rolled out to improve the diversity of the organisation. • Ongoing commitment to provide training on unconscious bias, diversity and inclusion. • Reinforced the requirement of Equality Impact Assessments and the relevant training provided to staff.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered the first of an expected series of training on the Public Sector Equality Duty, which around 180 staff have attended to date. <p>Staff support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established two staff network groups - a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic network group which is helping the organisation to evolve and improve its internal culture and working practice and a Gender Equality Group which has already made recommendations to the Senior Management Team which have been adopted e.g. created a caregivers survey to identify the key issues facing staff during the COVID-19 lockdowns and proposed solutions. We are also in the process of establishing an LGBTQIA+ group to bring staff together and support the organisation in tackling issues of discrimination and inclusivity relating to sexual orientation. • Our Diversity, Equality and Inclusion intranet site details all our work on diversity, and how staff across the organisation are working to ensure that we become a more diverse organisation. • We have enhanced the role of a Senior Leadership Team Diversity Champion by embedding this in all diversity and equality groups throughout the organisation. • The Senior Leadership is producing a new vision for the organisation's approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and is currently consulting with staff. <p>Our work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have established a Public Sector Equality Duty compliance group which is developing an action plan to include more explicit embedding of the PSED in our decision-making processes. • Diverse images are now common place in our communications and on our communication channels • We are committed to continuing our efforts to be an organisation that celebrates and promotes diversity. <p>Eligibility for Grants varies and is often restricted by criteria set by the Government. To aid transparency details of funded projects are available on our website. The LEP is committed to Inclusive Growth for the region to enable everyone to contribute and benefit from wealth creation, enjoy the benefits of a strong economy and enjoy a decent standard of living.</p>
<p>What support is there for students who are needing jobs post graduation?</p>	<p>The LEP FutureGoals incentive provides inspiration and support to help people of all ages choose their career paths, give them the right skills and experience to start work or change career and provide vital links between education and employers.</p> <p>It aims to map current and future areas where there are skills shortages (for example in manufacturing and engineering, construction, digital, health and creative industries) by supporting young people with a wealth of careers advice covering routes, from apprenticeships to further training, to starting your own business.</p> <p>It supports educators and careers advisers with free resources about careers, industries and the skills needed in the region. We encourage employers to #giveanhour to inspire young people about specific industries in the region.</p>

	<p>FutureGoals also supports career changers encouraging people looking to move career to look into growing industries in the region and areas where there are skills shortages, and working with local colleges to offer free reboot courses to help people looking to retrain/learn new skills.</p> <p>The LEP's Business Support also underpins this work by working with employers in the region to offer apprenticeship support, working with the Government on their Kickstart scheme, through our grant scheme to help regional businesses to grow and flourish and our Invest work which actively makes the case for businesses to locate or have a base in the region.</p>
<p>COVID - what have you done for local businesses - what is the LEP doing to aid recovery going forwards?</p>	<p>The LEP has supported businesses throughout the pandemic through our Business Support Service which gives businesses the opportunity to benefit from investment to purchase essential equipment, develop new products and process, and save money on their energy bills.</p> <p>By the end of 2020 the LEP's Business Support Services had helped over 3,500 businesses with many receiving intensive support such grants or one-to-one advice. We have also signposted businesses to business support grants available through our partner local authorities. Our Employment Hub has so far supported 1,900 businesses with advice on furlough and recruitment during the pandemic.</p> <p>The Combined Authority also convened the West Yorkshire Economic Recovery Board at the start of the pandemic which – brings together civic and business leaders from across the region to lead West Yorkshire out of the pandemic. The board produced a draft plan setting out actions for a locally-led recovery that builds on the region's strengths and puts in place measures to support jobs.</p> <p>The draft plan identifies four distinctive West Yorkshire propositions that can deliver not just for the region's recovery, but also make a significant contribution to the UK economy as a whole.</p> <p>Each proposition includes both an offer and ask to Government: Health innovation (£60 million) – building on the region's strengths in devices, data and diagnostics, unlocking industry collaboration, skills and a globally positioned Act Early institution on disease prevention. Lives transformed by digital tech (£159 million) – ensure no one is left behind in a digital-enabled future, by driving infrastructure, digital skills and Made Smarter investment to support digital adoption in manufacturing. Transition to Net Zero Carbon Resilient Economy (£192 million) – supporting our net zero 2038 target, with unique industry strengths in low carbon transport, clean agri-tech, construction and circular economy, delivering critical green and blue infrastructure, up to 71,300 jobs and skills and training to help people into low carbon opportunities. Entrepreneurship (£340 million) – focussed on our diverse communities, existing scale-up performance and our MIT REAP programme for high growth</p>

	<p>pre-starts, unleash an entrepreneurial revolution, transforming empty properties and supporting high-growth potential start-ups.</p> <p>The Combined Authority continues to call on the government to commit to support the plans for recovery.</p>
<p>How is the LEP supporting innovation in the region?</p>	<p>The LEP, as part of the West Yorkshire Innovation Network, aims to create an inclusive and collaborative environment for innovation to thrive in our City Region, connecting businesses with the right support to make their ideas or projects become a reality. Our team of Innovation Growth Managers - part of our Connecting Innovation programme support SMEs in an independent advisory/business brokerage service which aims to help businesses gain access to the variety of innovation support and expertise available, from research organisations and advisory services to funding and private sector organisations.</p> <p>The LEP also coordinates the West Yorkshire Innovation Festival - created by the West Yorkshire Innovation Network. This year's festival focused on raising the profile of innovation in our region and brought together innovative businesses, expertise, resources and innovation support available to help businesses with new ideas for products, processes or services.</p> <p>'We were able to support over 780 businesses with hands-on practical advice and support on issues related to the impact of the end of the EU Exit Transition period from late 2020 through to end of March 21. This took the form of four main areas of support, which were : - response service on any EU Exit query from a business, enquiries directly related to import/export documentation requirements, legal support and support with marketing/communications.</p> <p>Since April 21, we have been able to keep the response service in place and to date that has supported an additional 65 businesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LEP and CA has recently signed off its new Innovation Strategy: Innovation for everyone. It covers 12 priority areas where the region needs to make progress to drive both R&D investment and innovation diffusion – all with an increased emphasis on inclusion and diversity. Work will be undertaken now to implement. • Innovation is critical to our economic recovery and we have secured funding from year one gainshare as part of our Economic Recovery Plan to put in place a package of support for entrepreneurs. Part of this will be dedicated to supporting innovation driven enterprises with significant growth potential. • The LEP has formed the West Yorkshire Innovation Network with innovation support partners across the region with the aim of improving the innovation support available for businesses in the region and maximising the impact of our collective innovation assets. • The LEP led the first West Yorkshire Innovation Festival with the West Yorkshire Innovation Network which was designed to celebrate innovation in the region, shine a spotlight on some of our most innovative small businesses and promote the support

	<p>available for businesses. The event in 2021 was virtual but we aim to come back bigger and better next year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LEPs flagship innovation programme is Connecting Innovation. Our team of Innovation Growth Managers - support SMEs in an independent advisory/business brokerage service which aims to help businesses gain access to the variety of innovation support and expertise available, from research organisations and advisory services to funding and private sector organisations. • The LEP is putting in place resource to support the healthtech agenda in the region – to help convene partners and coordinate activity, maximising the impact of our significant health innovation assets for economic growth and health and wellbeing outcomes.
<p>What have you been doing to support businesses with the challenges and changes that Brexit has created?</p>	<p>The LEP has supported businesses with advice on the EU exit throughout the negotiations and is now supporting businesses with the practicalities of the new rules on trade with the EU. We offer advice and support on the new rules on exports, imports, tariffs, data and hiring. Until the end of June, West and North Yorkshire businesses can access free support to navigate the UK's new trading relationship with the EU from expert consultants at Enterprise Growth Solutions (EGS). Support includes tailored practical advice and guidance.</p> <p>We also signpost businesses to local, government and national support schemes and run webinars on a variety of related topics.</p> <p>Our Resource Efficient Business (REBiz) programme provides advice and financial support for small or medium-sized employers to become more resource efficient, and adopt circular business models and practices. Through REBiz 148 businesses have received free resource efficiency audits and advice. 34 grants have been awarded totalling over £358,500 - leveraging nearly £590,000 of SME investment. Forecasts are for 1,066 tCO2savings per annum from approved grant funded projects.</p>
<p>How are you making sure businesses help with the region's net zero ambition by 2038?</p>	<p>The LEP supports businesses to be more energy efficient in a number of ways. We work with CityConnect to offer 'Bike Friendly Business' grants of up to £5,000 as well as free advice to support businesses looking to encourage staff to cycle to work. We work with businesses via the Travel Plan Network which helps to improve travel options for employees, the free Network offers discounts and free advice on sustainable transport options.</p> <p>Through our resource efficiency offer and circular economy project the LEP also helps businesses with advice, support and grant funding to help save money, reduce resources and carbon use.</p>
<p>How is the LEP helping the cultural sector - who have been hit hardest by the pandemic?</p>	<p>The cultural sector is so important in our region's economy – to support jobs and tourism and to drive inclusive and sustainable growth. The region has many strengths – it is a vibrant, welcoming and exciting place to be, as the new home of Channel 4, with Leeds 2023 and the bid for Bradford to be UK</p>

	<p>City of Culture in 2025, our cultural and creative places have even more to give. Prior to the crisis, the Combined Authority in partnership with Local Authorities and DCMS Arms-Length Bodies developed a cultural framework to underpin its work on developing the cultural sector in West Yorkshire. It provides a route for engaging with the sector and aligning resources to capitalise on cultures ability to deliver prosperous, healthy, engaging, high quality places.</p> <p>The cultural framework also recognises the unique role of culture in reducing inequality, health and well-being and helping to deliver carbon reduction and create a sustainable environment. Much of our aims during the pandemic had to pivot to support our approach to support to the cultural sector in recovery.</p> <p>The role of culture played a predominant role in the development of our Economic Recovery Plan (ERP) in particular the plan aimed to: work to maximise opportunities for the sector to access DCMS/ ACE cultural recovery funding; support and signposting cultural organisations to relevant existing opportunities and support; identified opportunities to help local authorities deliver their cultural recovery plans.</p> <p>Small firms in the creative sector could access the following grants during 20/21: COVID-19 Recovery grants of up to £3k for small businesses to access support with ICT equipment, and/or, with external consultancy advice on business resilience. 1114 grants were awarded with a combined value of circa £2.8m.</p> <p>Digital Resilience Vouchers of up to £5k for ICT equipment related to resilience and the pivoting of products and services. 400 grants awarded with a combined value of £1.06m. We can't identify at this stage how many of the businesses supported by the above grants were in the creative and cultural sector, but anecdotally we know there was a good take-up from the sector.</p>
<p>How is the LEP supporting inclusive growth?</p>	<p>The LEP is committed to wiping out social and economic inequality in West Yorkshire while driving future prosperity through innovation and entrepreneurship. We recognise the importance of inclusive growth that could deliver a £7 billion boost to the economy.</p> <p>The LEP Board has recently implement two new frameworks to guide future activity and tackle some of the most urgent long-term challenges facing the region, especially in terms of economic recovery.</p> <p>The Inclusive Growth and Innovation Frameworks developed by the LEP and Combined Authority, promote well-being, skills, digital and transport connectivity and foster a culture of innovation with the long-term aspiration of eliminating economic and social disparities in the region.</p> <p>The Frameworks build on the strength of the region's diverse communities, make better use of untapped social and physical assets such as community groups and derelict buildings that</p>

	<p>can be transformed, work closely with third sector organisations and create an environment where innovation and new businesses can flourish.</p> <p>The Inclusive Growth Framework aims to promote well-being, higher skills, and good digital and transport connectivity with the ultimate aim of eliminating economic and social disparities. It seeks to boost social mobility for individuals and communities; promote 'good work' in terms of pay, conditions and progression; and make sure that everyone has the opportunity to share the advantages of the economic recovery.</p> <p>Closely related to this is the Innovation Framework to support innovation and entrepreneurship in Leeds City Region, which will be a fundamental part of the region's recovery from COVID-19, as well as its long-term economic future.</p> <p>The LEP wants the region to build a global reputation as having an open, inclusive, thriving and coherent innovation ecosystem, where SMEs, entrepreneurs and individuals are inspired to innovate, and can easily navigate the support landscape and connect and collaborate with others to create new and better solutions for business growth and societal good.</p> <p>The West Yorkshire Combined Authority is also working to develop a 'good work standard' for the region, to recognise employers that commit to positive employment practices, such as paying a living wage, offering secure work, and development and progression, as it looks to the economic recovery beyond the current COVID-19 pandemic.</p>
<p>How we get support for Community LED housing sector I presented strategy document to LEP in 2016</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. We want to make sure communities across West Yorkshire have access to good quality, sustainable, affordable homes.</p> <p>Our aim for housing and regeneration in the region is to deliver 'well-connected neighbourhoods which support inclusive growth with good quality homes, in places where people want to live'.</p> <p>We deliver priority projects according to our Spatial Priority Areas, urban centres and growth zones through the West Yorkshire Strategic Housing Pipeline, which aims to meet the needs of communities across our region. As a result of the West Yorkshire devolution deal, funding for housing is largely delivered through the Brownfield Housing Fund. The Combined Authority secured £67 million of government funding for housing in the region which will help to build 4500 to 6000 new homes across West Yorkshire over the next four years.</p> <p>Affordable and sustainable housing is a key priority for the Mayor, one of her ten Mayoral pledges is to 'Build 5000 sustainable homes including council houses and affordable homes'. It would be great to discuss community led housing with you further to understand how the approach could help our strategy going forwards – please contact our head of housing Judith.Furlonger@westyorks-ca.gov.uk to discuss this.</p>

	<p>We also work with a wide variety of partners to make our plans a reality – it may be useful to contact them for further information. Our partners include; local housing associations and the West Yorkshire Housing Partnership, the five West Yorkshire Local Authorities, Homes England, MHCLG as well as private developers. The West Yorkshire Housing Partnership represents the affordable housing sector in our region and Homes England also have programmes open on a continuous engagement process for community led initiatives.</p>
<p>As part of the recovery many local, small businesses require marketing support, but do not have the minimum 2 employees to be eligible for the current voucher schemes. Are there any plans to offer marketing support (including website development and digital marketing) for sole traders, freelancers, independent contractors, partnerships and other micro businesses?</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. The LEP supported small businesses throughout the pandemic with a suite of support services, including directing people to the Governments income support schemes for the self-employed. Unfortunately, the Digital Resilience Voucher scheme which you may be referring to did have a criteria of 'businesses with a minimum of two employees' – this was linked to the Government criteria attached to the funding.</p> <p>Help and support remains available through the LEP and its partners. Our gateway team are always available to offer tailored advice to suit your needs, please get in touch with our business support service for more information at BusinessSupport@the-lep.com or 0113 348 1818.</p>
<p>Community Businesses trade and contribute hugely to economic and environment indicators. Unlike other LEPs, LEP does not support us, as for years I have been told we don't meet the definition. Why are you not recognising community businesses? This change will bring sustainability, access to economic and environmental grants and support.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. All LEP products and services are available for social enterprises as long as they meet the specific criteria for each project. We have been able to support several social enterprises in the region.</p> <p>We also recently supported the SEYH awards and we are keen to work closely with the sector. Please get in touch with our business support team at BusinessSupport@the-lep.com so we can discuss your specific needs.</p>
<p>Can the Leeds City Region work more collaboratively with bordering Authorities to ensure Public transport across border is not disadvantaging communities like mine in Silsden that are on the periphery of the area. Silsden has no direct Bus links to the West where many residents attend education and employment services. The nearest settlements are to the West but these all fall within the bordering authorities area.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. We work across the five West Yorkshire local authorities and bordering areas to improve transport links across the region. We are working to ensure that across boundaries we have agreed routes and approaches to ensure that routes provide key links across boundaries where required. We'll be consulting on several schemes over the coming months and years as they come through the pipeline.</p> <p>To better understand the picture of bus travel across the region last year we completed a Strategic Bus Network Review which set out a series of interventions, that if delivered could generate patronage growth. You can view the summary of the review here: West Yorkshire Strategic Bus Reviews (amazonaws.com)</p> <p>The Review, along with other key reports links into our wider Connectivity Infrastructure Plan which sets out a long-term transport infrastructure investment programme over the next 20 years. The plan aims to ensure all modes of transport are connected across the region and all communities are well</p>

	<p>connected. It's really important that we hear your views on our proposals, formal engagement is closed on Connectivity at present, but please contact us here for more information: connectivity@westyorks-ca.gov.uk</p> <p>In addition, you may be aware that the Mayor of West Yorkshire has pledged to work towards bringing buses back into public control. The mayor is keen to ensure buses are the first choice for travel in our region - with more choice, better services, simple and affordable fares as well as quicker, more frequent journeys, running where and when people need them. Work is progressing on this key pledge and a paper recommending the start of the process to bring buses back into public control will be discussed at the next Combined Authority meeting on 24 June.</p> <p>We are also working on bus links to locations outside of West Yorkshire through our work on the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Bus Partnership. Each of these processes require the Combined Authority to work with neighbouring Local Transport Authorities to understand the cross boundary offer.</p>
<p>I have 2 Badges Private Hire Driver license and Hackney Carriage Driver license every year I'm paying 2 fees as well. DVLA rule is Bus & Lorry drivers allowed to drive car because their license is higher than car license same way HCDL is above the PHDL license plus many councils in England HCDL allowed to work as a PHD plus many councils have only 1 license policy In Bradford council if HCD wants to change the license as a PHD they allowed to swap any time. As I think Leeds city council should do something for drivers that we can avoid to pay double fees always. And also as I think LCC this policy is unjustified.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. For questions on Leeds City Council policies please contact the council directly here: general.enquiries@leeds.gov.uk</p>
<p>What investment can be put in to Normanton market to get the market traders back.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. For questions on market traders in Wakefield please contact the council here: https://www.wakefield.gov.uk/community/welcome-to-wakefield</p>
<p>What have LEP done to ensure Black and Ethnic minorities in the region feel included in its Strategy</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. The LEP is committed to achieving diversity and equality of opportunity in everything we do. The current LEP Board is the most diverse we've ever had, with members from a variety of backgrounds in the private sector, including the arts, social enterprise, academia and management consulting.</p> <p>With a total of 18 members, 13 members of the Board are from the private sector and five from the public sector, with equal</p>

	<p>numbers of men and women. Our latest recruitment campaign for LEP Board members was specifically aimed at ensuring we appointed members from diverse backgrounds that would be representative of the City Region economy. The LEP also has a Diversity Champion who leads on ensuring diversity and inclusion is part of all key decisions.</p> <p>The LEP Equality and Diversity Policy recognises the competitive advantage of our diverse economy and we aim to integrate equality into all that we do, and others do on behalf of the Leed City Region. The LEP is committed to engaging with all stakeholders and to be inclusive and transparent in all communications. Our priorities and objectives mostly deliver an equality impact, for example, by targeting key sectors, priority groups, and local communities.</p> <p>In addition, we will work with our partners to ensure that all project development, commissioning and tendering procedures support the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advancing equality of opportunity; • Showing our commitment to support those with a protected characteristic into enterprise and employment; • Ensuring the elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation. We will ensure barriers to equality are being proactively tackled at delivery level and in delivering our equality and diversity policy we will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the impact on equality as we develop our strategies, policies and programmes, and consider what actions, if any, may be appropriate to improve any identified adverse impacts; • Through West Yorkshire Combined Authority role as the accountable body, monitor our social, environmental and economic impact and the impact on equality as we implement our strategies, policies and programmes; • Be open and transparent and publish all information regarding our progress on achieving equality and diversity; • Work in partnership with the range of local, regional, and national organisations to create new and better actions; • Provide excellent customer care by ensuring that services are provided by knowledgeable and well-trained staff who understand the needs of their communities; and • Promote best practice
<p>if LEP wants businesses to grow they so will the No of their customers, clients & staff, what incentive is there for that, like free parking, e.g. every time i apply for a job in leeds city centre they can't offer free parking so i decline those?</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. For questions on Leeds City Council policies please contact the council directly here: general.enquiries@leeds.gov.uk</p>