

Andy Haldane

Head of Levelling Up Taskforce
Cabinet Office
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Dear Andy,

Local Enterprise Partnerships: Delivering Levelling-Up

On behalf of the Chairs of England's 38 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) I welcome and congratulate you to your new role as Head of the Levelling Up Taskforce. On a personal level, I very much look forward to working with you to build on the work you initiated with the Industrial Strategy Council and for LEPs to play a central role in translating the levelling up agenda into a clear benefit for our local communities.

You may recall we joined a number of ISC roundtables and contributed significantly to the ISC report *'Understanding the policy-making processes behind local growth strategies in England'* which made plain that "...there is a clear need for a commitment to longer-term funding to support LEPs in building policy making capacity". It also made clear that LEPs were well placed to coordinate sub-national economic policy, convene local partners and collaborate across public, private, academia and the third sector. All critical to delivering the national levelling up ambitions locally. As you concluded:

"As this research report from the Industrial Strategy Council demonstrates, making a success of levelling-up will require a significant investment in capacity and capability at the sub-national level."

The ISC's recent report - *'What does it take to 'level up' places'* also reinforces some of the fundamental principles needed to ensure that levelling up is a success across all our regions, namely that:

- "levelling-up of places is possible, but it requires a clear vision, strong local leadership and appropriate powers".
- "There is no single "silver bullet" policy and place-specific strategies are needed to effectively drive local economic growth in different contexts".
- "Robust, sustainable and transparent" governance, long-term commitment and targeted support for disadvantaged groups are crucial to the long-term success of places".

I believe LEPs have a clear future value here and fulfil all the above, and more. Indeed, some of the key factors associated with local economic growth mentioned in that report are areas where LEPs excel; strong local leadership and consensus, collaboration, transport infrastructure, working with universities and stimulating innovation. This was also borne out in my recent discussions with Alex Hickman, which underpinned the role of local business leadership in helping to galvanise levelling up outcomes.

You may be aware that the future role of LEPs has been under review since March 2021, with the government considering what functions LEPs should provide post-pandemic. As business led local partnerships, we are keen to ensure that local businesses continue to have a clear strategic voice in driving regional economic recovery, as well as providing access to high quality, locally tailored business support services. That is a role we have played throughout the pandemic and which enabled us, within a matter of weeks, to launch over 100 locally tailored support initiatives to help SMEs which, in turn, saw almost 2m

businesses turn to their LEPs within the first six months of the pandemic, more than the entire previous year.

Since the start of the LEP review, we have been working closely with the Cities and Local Growth Unit to identify those areas of activity that most add value to the economy, where the role of the LEP has proven pivotal at bringing about local growth and, most importantly, where LEPs can help drive increased activity with business to ensure they thrive and grow both globally and within the UK. Our discussions with CLGU officials identified four future functions that add the biggest value for consideration by Minister's:

1. **Strategic:** providing place-based economic expertise and insight to central and local government and helping secure long term inclusive growth at the local level as part of the Plan for Growth. This builds on LEPs' 10 year investment in the extensive economic evidence bases which underpin local recovery.
2. **Business Support:** delivering a programme of joined-up, expert and tailored business advice and support for local businesses through the extremely successful LEP Growth Hub network, ensuring they play their full part in the Plan for Growth, and enabling SMEs in particular to thrive, including internationally.
3. **Innovation & Investment:** identifying key local sectors and industries and designing and delivering interventions to make them more competitive, and exploit local opportunities. LEPs are best placed to come together across the country to help the UK develop global leadership in a range of emerging sectors particularly in the sciences and Net Zero. Programmes will ensure that businesses have the relevant skills they need and that local people are able to realise their potential. Working with DIT, LEPs will continue to encourage major private inward investment as well as developing export opportunities.
4. **Current Commitment:** continuing to deliver our existing programmes including Getting Building Fund, Local Growth Fund, Enterprise Zones, and Freeports. LEPs have an excellent record in project execution and will ensure that the remainder of these commitments are delivered on time, to budget, and with clear output measures.

These clearly resonate with much of your thinking and I would be keen to update you in a little more detail on the review. I and my fellow business leaders are keen to get on with supporting you in levelling up across all our local communities, and the sooner we can conclude the review the quicker we can get on with that. To this end we are happy to make arrangements with your private office or, if easier, for a member of your private office team to contact Mark Livesey at the LEP Network mark@lepnetwork.net.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Mark Bretton
Chair, LEP Network