

40 - 50 Wellington House,
Wellington Street,
Leeds
LS1 2DE

19th August 2020

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

Dear Rishi,

The 2.3 million people of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield are the lifeblood of the West Yorkshire economy. They have demonstrated throughout our immediate response to COVID-19 the resilience and sense of community that makes our region a distinctly great place to live, learn, work, visit and do business.

Yet they potentially face the prospect of unemployment at almost 15%, with the regional economy shrinking by up to 30% by 2021. That is the base from which levelling up will be judged. We are doing everything possible to support our communities through this period, but we must also look ahead and act now to put in place a recovery that delivers for them, in the short term and in the years to come.

Our £1.4bn recovery plan is about building the foundations for levelling up, focussed on supporting jobs in resilient businesses, on helping people get the skills they need to secure those jobs, and on the infrastructure people need to access opportunities. It capitalises on both the uniqueness and interdependence of our places, the position of Leeds as the core city and biggest jobs market, the role of our manufacturers at the heart of Northern logistics connectivity, and the contribution of urban and rural areas across West Yorkshire towards work, health and happiness. It champions the role of culture in shaping our offer to the world. It builds on a collaboration of civic, business, trade union, health and third sector leaders, who know our place, acting together through our Economic Recovery Board to make sure our plan delivers for people across West Yorkshire.

As Leaders of our Authorities, and with the strong support of the LEP, we have set a vision for the region's future, to grow a more inclusive, resilient, sustainable economy with more productive businesses, better levels of skills and entrepreneurialism, less inequality, and better environmental sustainability. Our plan identifies a broad range of targeted, locally tailored approaches, designed to work alongside the extensive, broad support that Government has focussed on during the crisis to date, as we look to recover and reimagine the West Yorkshire economy.

In particular, our plan includes four distinctive investment propositions totalling £750m that build on what West Yorkshire uniquely offers to the UK.

- 1. Health innovation** (£60m) – building on the region’s world-leading strengths in devices, data and diagnostics, unlocking industry collaboration, skills and a globally positioned Act Early institution on disease prevention.
- 2. Lives transformed by digital tech** (£158.9m) - ensure no one is left behind in a digital and tech enabled future from the basis of the fastest growing digital sector in the UK, driving broadband infrastructure, digital skills and Made Smarter investment to support digital adoption in manufacturing.
- 3. Transition to Net Zero Carbon Resilient Economy** (£192m) – supporting our net zero 2038 target, with unique industry strengths in low carbon transport, clean agri-tech, construction and circular economy, delivering a pipeline of critical green and blue infrastructure, up to 71,291 jobs and skills and training
- 4. Entrepreneurship** (£340m) – focussed on the diversity of our communities, our existing scale-up performance and our MIT REAP programme for high growth pre-starts, unleashing innovation driven entrepreneurs, transforming empty properties and providing accelerator funding for high-growth potential start-ups.

This is an opportunity to reimagine our economy to address the long-term gaps in attainment, productivity, skills, health and infrastructure that exist across the UK. Plans targeted on the specific needs of places like West Yorkshire, with investment to match, are the only way to achieve the Government’s ambition of levelling-up.

Our locally led recovery plan provides the blueprint to follow, supported by the collective will and the strong partnerships needed to deliver. We ask Government to demonstrate its commitment to our status as a Mayoral Combined Authority and to levelling-up, by working with us to see this plan implemented.

Doing so can add £8.5bn to the UK economy by bringing productivity up to the UK average. It could create 70,000 new jobs in West Yorkshire’s low carbon economy. Not doing so, will threaten up to 58,000 people with long term unemployment and will cost the Exchequer £2.4bn in 2020 alone.

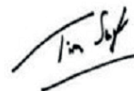
We would like to meet you as soon as possible to make rapid progress towards realising this opportunity.

Best wishes,



Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe

Leader, City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Chair, West Yorkshire Combined Authority



Cllr Tim Swift MBE

Leader, Calderdale Council



Cllr Shabir Pandor

Leader, Kirklees Council



Cllr Judith Blake CBE

Leader, Leeds City Council



Cllr Denise Jeffrey

Leader, Wakefield Council



Roger Marsh OBE DL

Chair, Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership
and NP11