

Rt Hon Boris Johnson  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

19 December 2019

Dear Prime Minister,

Congratulations on your recent election - we look forward to working with you and your Government to take forward our shared ambitions. We write publicly to outline our key priorities, and to urge your newly-returned Government to support our ambition to create a region delivering clean growth which benefits all our communities. Following your recent commitment to the devolution agenda, we also ask that powers and funding are provided that allow us to make progress.

Our priority areas are **devolution, the climate emergency, skills, transport in the north, and mass transit in West Yorkshire**. We have attached high level notes on these topics to this letter.

Our urgent priority is to secure the benefits of **devolution** for all our communities. This is a vital part of completing the devolution map across the country and will enable us to drive economic growth, tackle the climate emergency and regenerate, strengthen and level up our towns. We seek to build on the progress made following your speech in Rotherham supporting Yorkshire-wide collaboration and opening up negotiations on a possible Leeds City Region agreement, alongside making progress towards devolution for all parts of Yorkshire. We ask that these productive discussions continue, with a view to agreeing a way forward that can be announced in your Government's first budget.

We have a City Region commitment to becoming a net **zero carbon region by 2038**, with significant progress made by the end of 2030. We are also strengthening our region's resilience in the face of our changing climate, and in particular the threat of flooding which had catastrophic consequences for our communities four years ago, as well as more recently for our neighbours in South Yorkshire. We seek your commitment to supporting our pipeline of flood defence and alleviation interventions to ensure the safety of our communities and our businesses.

We welcome your promise to make urban transport in regions such as ours as good as London. There is an opportunity to demonstrate this by responding quickly and positively to our Transforming Cities Fund submission, as well as providing vital development funding for our **mass transit** scheme, something we know you strongly supported during the election campaign.

We are clear in our approach that urban transport investment must be integrated with upgrading the North's **strategic transport network**. Your manifesto promise to build Northern Powerhouse Rail between Leeds and Manchester is welcome, but it must be via Bradford city centre and must sit alongside a funding commitment to support our broader investment pipeline. The prompt conclusion of the Oakervee Review must also be the moment when Government fully commits to the delivery of HS2 to Leeds and linking to the East Coast Mainline near York.

We also welcome your commitment to improving **skills**, including urgently needed reform of the Apprenticeship Levy, and ask that your Government adopts the recommendations of our Future Ready Skills Commission as you consider the implementation of the £3 billion National Skills Fund.

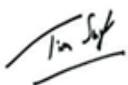
Above all, we ask your Government to recognise the role local government plays in supporting inclusive communities with a funding settlement which reflects the scale of the challenges and opportunities our district authorities face, particularly in terms of protecting children and adult social care.

We look forward to working with you to deliver transformational benefits across our towns, cities and communities, and would welcome meetings at the earliest opportunity in order to progress these ambitions at pace.

Yours sincerely,



**Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe**, Chair of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Leader of Bradford Council



**Cllr Tim Swift MBE**, Leader of Calderdale Council



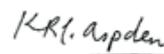
**Cllr Shabir Pandor**, Leader of Kirklees Council



**Cllr Judith Blake CBE**, Leader of Leeds City Council



**Cllr Denise Jeffery**, Leader of Wakefield Council



**Cllr Keith Aspden**, Leader of City of York Council



**Roger Marsh OBE DL**, Chair, Leeds City Region LEP, Chair, NP11

## Our Ambition

**Devolution is critical to deliver our economic objectives and growth in a post-Brexit world.** It would allow us to secure more investment in desperately needed transport and digital infrastructure, increase inward investment, address the climate emergency, better address the skills shortages in our workforce, and, critically, help tackle disadvantage where it exists in our communities. It would also enable us to **strengthen and level up our towns**, to drive growth, open up new opportunities and improve living standards.

**Sizeable parts of the City Region enjoy a great quality of life**, good wages, and lower living and housing costs, and for many the region is a great place to live, work, visit and invest. Yet, despite that, **the level of investment falls well short of genuinely rebalancing the UK economy.**

**Meaningful devolution** would show **Government's commitment** to the City Region by **addressing the historical lack of investment.**

## Our Actions

- Constructive negotiations have been taking place with Government to secure a devolution deal
- There is an ambition for wider devolution across Yorkshire more broadly, which remains a priority for the majority of local partners across the region
- A Leeds City Region devolution deal could be considered a stepping stone towards achieving this wider ambition, and would unlock powers and funding whilst the wider proposal is further developed

## Our Challenges

The calling of a general election led to the pausing of negotiations around a Leeds City Region devolution deal which we are keen to quickly resume.

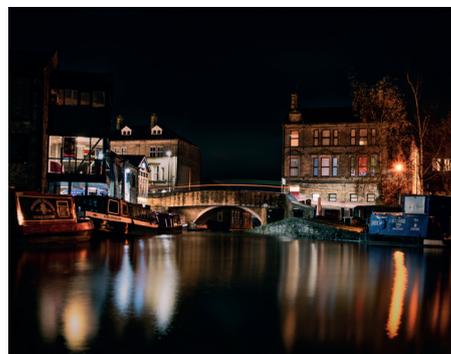
## Our Ask

As the **largest City Region economy outside of London**, securing a Leeds City Region deal is a **vital part of completing the devolution map across the country.**

Our devolution priorities are to address transport and mass transit, skills, housing, business support, innovation and decarbonisation, in order to:

- Boost the region's economy and contribute more to national economy, which will be vital in a post-Brexit landscape
- Build a more inclusive economy by investing in communities and linking people to education and employment opportunities
- Strengthen and level up our towns to ensure no area is left behind
- Tackle the climate emergency

Given the **advanced progress in negotiations** prior to the election, we want to **urgently engage** with the Government to make **swift progress on securing a deal**, to have an immediate impact and unlock funding to deliver transformational benefits across the region.



# Tackling the Climate Emergency

## Our Ambition

We have set an ambitious target for the **Leeds City Region to become net zero carbon by 2038, with significant progress made by 2030** so we can make a full contribution to tackling the climate emergency.

## Our Actions

Within the powers and funding at our disposal we are already taking action. We are:

- Delivering a wide range of measures to reduce harmful carbon emissions in the region, including supporting businesses to be resource efficient, measures to improve the energy efficiency of homes and combat fuel poverty, and the introduction of electric vehicle charging points and low emission buses
- Reappraising our transport schemes and enhancing our assessment of future schemes in order to understand their potential impact on the climate emergency

## Our Challenge

To deliver on our ambition, the Leeds City Region's emission levels will have to be halved every five years - 14.5% year-on-year - and that more than 80% will need to be saved by early 2030, in order to play our role in limiting global temperature rise to between 1.5 and 2°C.

We know that even with all the projects we have identified and the actions we are already taking, **we need to go further and faster in the next 10 years**. We are looking to work with Government to achieve our ambition and will require devolution of powers and funding to be able to do so.

## Our Ask

- Devolved dedicated funding will allow us to **create regional funds which directly address the climate emergency** including:
- Low Carbon Project Fund - to support and accelerate projects
- Energy Efficiency Fund - to create zero emission homes
- Decarbonisation Fund - to support the total decarbonisation of the large energy and carbon intensive industry and transport sector by mid-2030
- Nature Fund – to enable the natural environment to play a significant role in reducing emissions and increasing our region's resilience to climate related events, including flooding

We also believe the **Government should address regulatory and policy obstacles** by:

- Allowing us to set higher energy efficient and near-zero-carbon new-build standards pre-2025
- Clarifying policy on the decarbonisation of heat and creating incentives for renewable heat
- Clarifying policy on how aviation will be decarbonised
- Working with us to co-design green finance models and create resources
- Making changes to fuel and vehicle taxation regimes



## Our Ambition

We want to create an **integrated, flexible and sustainable transport system**, which supports a productive economy and enables all our communities to benefit from the City Region's growth. A successful network is also **critical in achieving our target of a net zero carbon City Region** by 2038 and connecting our most deprived communities to employment and opportunities.

We are looking to work with Government to make these ambitions a reality, **building on your election commitments to deliver a transport revolution**, including the £350 billion Cycling Infrastructure Fund, parity with London for regional urban transport networks, support for better bus services, the development of metro and light rail schemes and the construction of Northern Powerhouse Rail.

## Our Actions

- We are delivering the West Yorkshire-plus Transport Fund pipeline of projects
- We are looking to transform public transport in order to regenerate our towns, connect communities to essential services and reduce carbon emissions
- We have a clear plan for improving walking and cycling infrastructure, and are exploring the purchase of First in West Yorkshire to take control of our bus network – but **need long term funding** to make these **public transport ambitions a reality**
- We are **starting to develop a mass transit solution** for the Leeds City Region to increase transport capacity and meet current and future demands, as we know we need a system which is capable of transporting larger numbers of passengers – more than bus, bikes and cars can accommodate
- We welcome the commitments that have been given to **Transport in the North**, which we **are clear must now be followed with meaningful action** in order to deliver real improvements for our passengers

## Our Challenges

- The North's rail network continues to demonstrate the consequences of decades of underinvestment with punctuality and reliability inconveniencing passengers, damaging our economy and undermining confidence in public transport
- The lack of capacity is a significant contributory factor which is why we remain committed to HS2, integrated with Northern Powerhouse Rail with a city centre stop in Bradford, an upgraded Trans-Pennine route and a transformed Leeds Station
- We need to decarbonise the transport network, which will be critical in order to achieve our net zero carbon ambition

## Our Ask

Alongside a clear commitment to the major rail investments outlined above, we need:

- Greater control of the regional rail network in order to have increased local accountability to ensure franchise commitments and improvements for passengers are delivered
- Additional funding to invest in clean transport modes
- We will require devolution of powers and funding to be able to achieve our ambitions. A priority for a devolution deal would be a devolved and consolidated multi-year capital and revenue transport budget, allowing a long-term strategic approach to improve connectivity across the region
- The ability to manage local highway, public and active transport, as well as funding between years as a single transport pot, provides greater certainty and therefore more effectiveness and flexibility to meet local priorities



# Mass Transit

## Our Ambition

With a population of over three million people, the Leeds City Region is the **largest metropolitan area in Europe without a mass transit system** and our economy is forecast to grow rapidly.

We want to deliver an innovative mass transit solution to support our clean growth and productivity ambitions by enabling our City Region to increase transport capacity, meet passenger need and create a multi-modal shift away from the private car, cutting congestion and improving air quality.

## Our Actions

A significant amount of work is already being done towards our ambition, including:

- Considering the network, understanding where the need is the greatest and the communities we will need to connect
- Engaging with industry and other key partners to understand the latest mass transit technologies and key research and development, so we can plan for delivering a 21st century, mass transit system.

## Our Challenges

To meet current and future demands the evidence demonstrates that we require a mass / urban transit system which is capable of transporting larger numbers of people – more than bus, bikes and cars can accommodate.

This is a key component of the emerging transport pipeline to deliver significant **improvements to local connectivity** and capacity, and help distribute the benefits of HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail across our communities.

Our existing programme of work provides a base for the technical work required, but what will be critical will be **ongoing central Government support** throughout the process, to ensure we are able to **once and for all deliver a mass transit solution** for our region.

## Our Ask

During the general election campaign, you specifically committed to supporting the development of a new metro/light rail scheme for West Yorkshire. **We are ready to work with you to deliver this critical infrastructure.**

We want to develop a **joint approach with Government** to deliver a mass transit solution for the region, which in the first instance would be through the **commitment of £20 million in development funding** so that construction can start from 2023/24 on the first phase, and agreement to work with the Combined Authority to fund delivery of mass transit proposals.



## Our Ambition

Giving **our people the right skills is vital to transforming our economy** by driving up productivity. Our vision is to design a skills system that meets the challenges of major structural shifts in the economy we will experience in the coming decades.

## Our Actions

Leeds City Region has been proactive with the funding and powers we have been afforded to date. We are already delivering in the following areas:

- Working with over 180 of our most disadvantaged schools to improve the futures of their young people
- Implementing our unique delivery agreements with further education colleges, setting out how they will better respond to changing needs of the workplace
- Supporting 250,000 people this year through our all-age careers platform, FutureGoals, to become better informed about career opportunities and supporting people through our new adult retraining programme, [re]boot
- Helping businesses to transfer levy funds to SMEs in skills shortage areas, as well as supporting businesses to recruit young people to employment and apprenticeship opportunities through our Employment Hub
- Supporting a Future-Ready Skills Commission which brings together independent experts in the to create a blueprint for a devolved skills system and argues the need for system reform

## Our Challenges

Low productivity and inequality still pervade. **The current skills system is centralised** and doesn't encourage responsiveness to the local context from education and training providers. National campaigns and initiatives often fail to resonate with employers, individuals and communities.

A skills system with powers and investment devolved to local areas would enable us to respond to these challenges. Our track record of delivering successful employment and skills programmes demonstrates the importance of local leadership and intervention.

## Our Ask

**We welcome your commitment to improving skills**, including urgently needed **reform of the Apprenticeship Levy**, the new **National Skills Fund** and **investment in further education** to address under-funding in colleges.

We want to work with Government to devolve powers and funding in order to reshape and re-structure local skills provision so that it is more responsive to the needs of employers and enables people from all communities to access and progress in high quality employment opportunities. This would **include full devolution of AEB provision, Skills Capital and control over Apprenticeship Levy funding**.

Through formal influence over colleges and independent training providers we will ensure that provision is more reflective of current and future workforce needs and delivered flexibly to meet the needs of learners who are in work. Support will be offered to providers where there are barriers to this responsiveness (e.g. recruiting/retaining staff, investing in capital equipment). Support will also be given to employers to engage with the education system.

## We also seek:

- Greater local accountability and powers over the National Careers Service, Careers and Enterprise Company and National Retraining Scheme in order to develop a strong all-age careers support that has local relevance, tailored advice and a direct line of sight to a job in order to deliver high quality careers support and inspire adults to retrain and upskill.
- Implementation of our landmark Delivery Agreements as a national pilot with an investment fund alongside to address key challenges
- Fully embedding skills in our wider business support offer, such as apprenticeship levy transfer and delivering a joined-up skills brokerage service
- Piloting of the recommendations from the Future Ready Skills Commission, which focus on simplifying the skills system to encourage behaviour change for training providers, employers and learners, with influence to reshape the national skills system

