

Midlands Development Conference

Conference Report

Thursday, 23rd May 2019

Ricoh Arena, Coventry

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 Built Environment Networking

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Foreword



Keith Griffiths,
Managing Director,
Built Environment
Networking

The Midlands Engine is the much talked about essential cog in the UK PLC machine. This year, Built Environment Networking decided to organise the first cross-regional development conference bringing together East and West Midland power players from the property development, construction and public sector's to map out the potential for property development lead economic growth across the region's major towns and cities.

The conference had a good blend of public sector decision makers, spliced with major developers and investors who are joining forces to create communities and commercial spaces. Moreover, the aforementioned projects are knitted together by a host of intricate infrastructure projects which are headlined by the game-changing HS2 development which will arrive before we know it!

Our events are evolving month on month and it is great to see the business eco-system that has developed around each location. People are actively booking on to attend not only to listen to our speakers but to also conduct

meetings and make deals. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of our corporate partners who continue to support our activity in the Midlands and beyond.

The Ricoh Arena was the perfect venue for our event and the day opened with two barnstorming keynote speeches from Lord Bob Kerslake of the UK 2070 commission and the brilliant Immy Kaur from Impact Hub. Our social media channels went into meltdown as she issued a big rallying call to the Built Environment to deliver more community friendly development and to keep their promises once they have committed to a particular project.

As Built Environment Networking expands our reach we will be hosting a variety of events in different cities and towns in the Midlands in 2020. We will also be returning with a second edition of this conference on 21st May 2020 so please keep an eye on all our platforms to book your tickets nice and early.

**See you at one of our events soon.
Keith**

keith.griffiths@built-environment-networking.com



Foreword



Peter Brett Associates (now part of Stantec), has a strong track record of supporting and enabling clients to realise their development opportunities and investment in the Midlands for 30 years. With three offices covering the Midlands, from Birmingham to Northampton to Cambridge, we have been and continue to be involved in some of the largest projects in the region, with successful delivery and value achieved for all stakeholders.

This conference aligns with our experience and plans going forward, focusing on infrastructure-led development across the Midlands, whether it be opening up old railway lines, improving utility connections, or making our roads work smarter to increase the efficiency of moving people within the region. The demand for people who want to live in the Midlands, and for those who want to set up or grow their businesses continues, and it is our collective responsibility to enable this to happen.

Lord Bob Kerslake opened the day by reminding attendees that the imbalance in the UK between London and outside is the greatest in northern Europe – this presents a great opportunity for us to tackle and change this imbalance.

The element of one-voice across the region was clear through the conference. Panel speakers in “The Engine and Collaboration” session recognised the challenges in delivering this; after all, we are used to being reported separately rather than collectively. This is changing, we are targeting a collective GVA of £54 billion and taking learning from the successes reported by Anthony May of Midlands Engine/ Nottingham County Council of the “China Strategy” will help achieve this target. This also enables us to bid collaboratively for funding to

deliver jobs, homes and infrastructure, as Tom Goshawk (D2N2 LEP) reinforced.

This also relies on the region playing to its strengths from an employment market – logistics, aerospace, advanced manufacturing, our universities and the opportunities created by delivering HS2 to the region. There are many places across the Midlands that will be connected by rail for the first time in decades as a result of delivering the Midlands Connect rail strategy and the HS2 connectivity packages. The quality of the place and interchange at these new hubs will be vital in securing their success. The panels, including Councillor Kay Cutts and Jonathan Bretherton, also highlighted the importance of providing green and blue infrastructure as well as roads, rail and utilities. Developers working together with the public sector should embrace and maximise the opportunity to use canals and water to generate power, provide transport routes, promote healthy living and positive wellbeing.

Patricia Willoughby (Head of Housing & Regeneration Policy at WMCA) said that “the housebuilding rate within the WMCA is four times the national average, with delivery of 14000 per annum”. This is a great success, in creating new places and regenerating others. However, Patricia also highlighted that this is still behind the target of 16,000.

There was optimism, enthusiasm and positivity throughout the day. It feels like a once in a lifetime opportunity to work as a region to capitalise on the Coventry City of Culture, Commonwealth Games and HS2 to maximise delivery of new homes, jobs and skills for people in the Midlands.



From the Keynotes



Lord Kerslake

House of Lords UK
2070 Commission

[@UK_2070](#)

A heavyweight House of Lords commission will back the establishment of four regional agencies to spearhead economic development in England, its Chair Lord Kerslake has revealed.

The former Chief Civil Servant outlined the headline recommendations of the Lords 2070 Commission in the opening speech at our Midlands Development Conference.

The commission, which has been set up to find long term solutions to tackling inequalities across England, is publishing its initial report ahead of major symposium in Leeds next month. Lord Kerslake said the report will press for “radical changes” in government policy.

Its recommendations will include the establishment of four major economic development agencies, covering the north, midlands, south west and south east respectively. The remit of the agencies would be to drive economic development and make “major decisions” on regional infrastructure.

Except for the one covering the south west, the four agencies would each cover a wider geographical area than the regional development agencies established under the previous. Labour government.

Lord Kerslake said the commission will also push for a spatial economic framework to help address inequalities within England, which he said are deeper than in any other European nation except “possibly” for Ireland and Slovakia.

DIFFERENT GOVERNMENTS HAVE ESSENTIALLY BEEN RELYING ON THE MARKET TO ADDRESS SPATIAL INEQUALITIES WITH LITTLE OR NO SPATIAL PLANNING. THERE IS PRETTY CLEAR EVIDENCE THAT THIS HAS NOT DELIVERED

he said, adding that while governments cannot direct private sector activity, they can encourage it.

Lord Kerslake added that it was “no coincidence” that England is both one of the

most unequal countries in Europe and “one of the most centralised.”

The peer also warned backers of HS2 that they will have their work cut out getting the project delivered in the face of mounting political resistance: “The original case for HS2 would have been much stronger if instead of just focusing on speed, it would have been part of a wider renewal of transport infrastructure and rebalancing Britain. You will have to work really hard to deliver that case to secure its future.”

Referring to previous votes in Parliament to support the project, he said:

DON'T BE DECEIVED BY BIG MAJORITIES, WE ARE AT A POINT WHERE IT WILL REQUIRE A SERIOUS FIGHT TO SECURE ITS FUTURE.

Lord Kerslake said the commission plans to publish its second report in September ahead of the party conferences with a final report early in the following year.



Immy Kaur

Chief Executive,
Impact Hub
Birmingham

[@ImpactHubBrum](#)

Impact Hub Birmingham is 6 years old and are a community focused organisation that is working on a plethora of projects around built environment issues like housing as well as social issues such as radical childcare alongside artists and social entrepreneurs with a goal of building a fairer and more equal city.

The group is led by Immy Kaur and a collaborative studio of renegade architects who left the profession 12 years ago with aim to design, encourage and promote more democratic cities. The company has a large remit but when it comes to the built environment but primarily encourages the use of Opendesk which is a global platform for ‘local makers’, connecting professionals from across the supply chain and cut out red tape. They are a resource for communities who don’t understand complex development processes to understand ‘dark matter’ issues such as master planning and legalities in construction.

THE ONE QUESTION THAT UNDERPINS IMPACT HUB'S MODUS OPERANDI IS “HOW DO YOU DESIGN CHANGE IN THIS WORLD?” AND LOBBIES FOR DECISION MAKERS AND THE MEDIA TO STOP ENCOURAGING ‘SILVER BULLET’ SOLUTIONS TO SOLVE COMPLEX INTERDEPENDENCY SOCIAL ISSUES SUCH AS OBESITY.

Birmingham is the youngest city in Europe but what does that actually mean? Impact Hub encourages people to come together, become ‘citizens of our place’ and collaborate to deliver change. Crowdfunded by over 1000 local and national contributors, the hub helps communities understand and use commercial business models to design and sustain community space. Keynoting at the conference, Kaur stated that the ultimate goal is to:

REINVENT THE 21ST CENTURY TOWN HALL BECAUSE THINGS HAVE GOT TEN TIMES HARDER IN THE LAST TEN YEARS FOR

COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE WEST MIDLANDS.

Their visionary Town Hall system will encourage communities to take ownership of their place and have a say in the type of development they would like to see and come together to inspire growth in their locality.

Pioneering a social movement around housing by using data sets to explore the use of empty plots around the city,

IMPACT HUB HAVE ALSO TRAINED PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT NEIGHBOURHOODS TO INTERROGATE THAT DATA AND COME UP WITH IDEAS ON HOW TO BEST USE THOSE SMALL SITES TO PROVIDE RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION FOR ALL.

They want to be the catalyst for how the supply chain can interact with communities to make the most of citizen power.

If you’re part of the Build Environment Supply Chain and want to learn more about getting involved and engaging the people you want to build for then please visit <https://birmingham.impacthub.net/>



The Midlands; The Engine and collaboration

Panel Members:



Chair: Phil Laycock

Director, Built Environment
Networking

@BENetworking



Dawn Baxendale

Chief Executive Officer,
Birmingham City Council

@BhamCityCouncil



Martin Reeves

Chief Executive,
Coventry City Council

@coventrycc



Andrew Pritchard

Chair, East Midlands
Councils

@EMCouncils



Anthony May

Chair of Operating Board,
Midlands Engine and Chief
Executive, Nottinghamshire
County Council

@midseengine

WARNING THAT HS2 IS NOT TOO LATE TO CANCEL

Work on HS2 is not too far advanced for the project to be cancelled, the Chair of the umbrella body for East Midlands Councils has warned.

Speaking at the Midlands Development Conference Andrew Pritchard, said: "The project is not so far down the track that it couldn't be cancelled. We need to speak very clearly to ministers that this is a really critical piece of national investment that must be delivered."

But Anthony May, Chief Executive of Nottinghamshire County Council expressed more confidence that HS2 will not be cancelled: "I've got more faith and trust in politicians, if the new government's first act is to turn it off at Birmingham, you can imagine the amount of lobbying that will fall on Whitehall."

May, who is also Chair of the Midlands Engine partnership's operating board, suggested that the project could be rebranded with a greater emphasis on the extra capacity that it will deliver, rather than speed:

CAPACITY IS MASSIVELY IMPORTANT BECAUSE RAIL USAGE HAS ROCKETED, WE STILL HAVE A VICTORIAN NETWORK AND CAN'T SQUARE THAT CIRCLE ANYMORE.

Dawn Baxendale, Chief Executive Officer of Birmingham City Council, said that delivering nationally critical important infrastructure decisions is a "real problem" in the UK.

"HS2 isn't just about the midlands, it's for all of the country. We have to be in a better shape after Brexit and this is a fundamental lynchpin in delivering that. The signs coming out of central government at the moment are fundamentally undermining the economic viability of this country. We are going to keep digging until we are told otherwise," she said.

She was backed up by Martin Reeves, Chief Executive of Coventry City Council, who said:

THE COUNTRY IS PLAYING RIDICULOUS CATCH UP FOR DECADES OF NON-INVESTMENT.

Reeves added that while London is the UK's only global city, it is relatively small in a global context and that the "jury is out" on the Midlands Engine.

But economic development can no longer rely on the trickle down of wealth, which has underpinned policy during the last four decades, he said: "We have to do something fundamentally different but that means giving something up: ceding power will get some way towards tackling some of the problems."

And the government will increasingly focus on ensuring that growth is inclusive, partly in response to wider social shifts, said May: "Young people are getting incredibly cynical about concrete, steel and tarmac as the answer to our



economic problems. Clearly, we must do something different in the future," he said, adding that public investment will have to be targeted in a different way. It's going to be a range of things and a national endeavour to change the way this country develops."

East Midlands Councils' Pritchard said that investing in one part of the midlands will benefit the whole of the region, giving as an example the upcoming launch of the rail hubs project that will relieve bottlenecks on the train network around Birmingham.

He said: "Interventions around Birmingham will have benefits as far as Lincoln because it enables a significant increase in east-west connections across the region. Just



because investment goes in one place doesn't mean it won't benefit other places."

Pritchard said the Midlands Engine allows the region to discuss its priorities with government pointing out that it had succeeded in securing investment in last autumn's budget got £17m for the DNRC (Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre) and £2m for the Toton hub.

But he urged the government to take on board the work carried out by local councils to agree regional road investment priorities which are due to be submitted to ministers in July:

IF WE HAVE DONE THE HARD YARDS AND PUT FORWARD A COHESIVE PROGRAMME OF INVESTMENT, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE GOVERNMENT REFLECTS THOSE PRIORITIES IN ITS DECISION MAKING.

And devolution of powers to a combined authority, like the Greater Manchester model, does not work in the east midlands context due to the diverse nature of the region's geography, which consists of a series of cities and towns rather than a single large conurbation, Pritchard said: "We have to think how we develop a governance that is appropriate to that geography."

Recalling her experience as the chief executive of a south coast local authority, Birmingham's Baxendale said that partnership working between councils can work in the absence of a combined authority, if councils can build a regional or sub regional consensus:

UNLESS YOU BUILD CONSENSUS AT REGIONAL OR SUB-REGIONAL LEVEL, WE WILL ALWAYS LOSE. WE CAN DO IT WITHOUT A COMBINED AUTHORITY.

HS2; How infrastructure will drive development

Panel Members:



Chair: Tim Allen

Director of Land Development - Midlands, PBA, now part of Stantec
 @PeterBrettLLP



Maria Machancoses

Director, Midlands Connect
 @MidsConnect



James Betjemann

Head of Enterprise Zone & Curzon Delivery, Birmingham City Council
 @BhamCityCouncil



Jonathan Bretherton

Managing Director, Urban Growth Company
 @UGCSolihull



Cllr Kay Cutts

Chair, Toton Delivery Board
 @NottsCC



Donovan Bailey

Head of Programme Interface, HS2 Ltd

LORDS IGNORED MIDLANDS, SAYS REGIONAL TRANSPORT BOSS

The midlands were “largely ignored” by a recent damning House of Lords committee report into High Speed 2, the Leader of the region’s transport body told the Midlands Development Conference

Maria Machancoses, Director of Midlands Connect, used her keynote presentation to kick off the conference’s HS2 session. She criticised the Lords economic affairs committee report on the controversial project to create a high-speed rail line from London to the north of England.

The heavyweight Lords committee’s report, published in mid-May, called for work on the HS2 to be paused and the northern rail network prioritised instead.

THE WHOLE REGION WAS ALMOST COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN, EFFECTIVELY WIPED OFF THE MAP,

said Machancoses, noting that the report had not contained a ‘single mention’ of the region’s showpiece projects like Birmingham’s Curzon Street station or the proposed east midlands hub at Toton.

decision to start the line in the capital on the grounds that capacity constraints on the London network must be remedied. He said:

“THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT CAPACITY ISSUES ON THE NETWORK COMING OUT OF LONDON. THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT CONCERN AT THAT END OF THE ROUTE WHICH IS WHY WE ARE DOING IT FIRST.”

Phase 1 of the line, which is planned to run between Birmingham and London, will significantly increase the capacity on the network with 18 trains per hour, each of which will be able to carry 1100 passengers, releasing existing track for other services.

Bailey said that HS2 is on track despite the negative headlines prompted by the House of Lords report. “Rest assured that HS2 is not only coming but it’s happening now,” he said, pointing to the total of 9,000 people already employed on the project and the £4bn plus spent on acquiring land.

Bailey said that work is under way on preparing the way for the main civils contracts on phase 1, including the demolition of buildings around key locations like Curzon St.

And Parliament should pass legislation paving the way for phase 2A of the line, which will run from Birmingham to Manchester by the end of this year and the bill for the Birmingham to Leeds phase 2B in 2022/23.

The project is the “most complex and largest” infrastructure project being delivered in Europe and the biggest rail project in the UK since the Victorian era, he added.

Midlands Connect’s Machancoses said the new Curzon



St station will open in 2026, helping to deliver 600,000 sq m of new offices and shops together with 4,000 new homes.

And HS2 would deliver the first upgrade of Stoke-on-Trent’s connections since its main rail station opened in 1848, she said:

“NOTHING HAS HAPPENED TO STOKE IN TERMS OF NEW CONNECTIVITY SINCE THEN. THE ARRIVAL OF HS2 BRINGS OPPORTUNITIES FOR STOKE’S BIGGEST OVERHAUL IN MORE THAN 150 YEARS WITH TWO NEW PLATFORMS AND REGENERATION OF A HUGE AREA OF LAND AROUND THE STATION.”

Machancoses also said HS2 would help efforts to improve the west midlands commuter rail network, which she described as the “fastest growing” outside London.

The Midlands Hub programme of improvements to the rail network around Birmingham will improve east-west connections across by the region by doubling the number of services between the city and both Hereford and Leicester. It will also enable the reintroduction of direct services with Coventry.

She said that the Midlands Hub project could increase rail passenger levels in the west midlands by 6m per annum and bring 1.6m more people across the region within an hour of cities and towns by public transport.

Machancoses said Midlands Connect is also submitting to ministers a five-year programme of 11 road projects, which are worth almost £600m, in a bid to ensure that the region gets a fair share of the £3.5bn set aside by the government for national road improvements.

James Betjeman, Head of Enterprise Zone & Curzon delivery at Birmingham City Council, said the authority has secured the incorporation of a tram stop into the HS2 station’s design. The council is also consulting on a supplementary planning document that will provide a framework for development around the Curzon Street station.

And Jonathan Bretherton, Managing Director of the Urban Growth Company that is overseeing the scheme planned around the HS2 station mooted next to Birmingham Airport, told delegates that Lendlease is due to submit a planning application next year for the site where it has recently been appointed preferred development partner.

He said that the Solihull council owned company’s key challenges included remedying a “massive” 80MW short fall in capacity on the local electricity network and ensuring that the site is ready to receive the fast Sprint buses when they arrive.



Infrastructure; Linking communities and placemaking

Panel Members:



Chair: Ian Liddell

Managing Director - Planning & Advisory, WSP
@wsp



Anne Shaw

Director – Network Resilience, Transport for West Midlands
@TransportforWM



Adnan Saif

Director – West Midlands, Canal & River Trust
@CanalRiverTrust



Stephen Chaytow

Chair, Manchester & East Midlands Rail Action Partnership



Jonathan Wallis

Development Director, DB Symmetry
@dbsymmetry



Christopher Blake

New Station & Services Manager, West Midlands Trains
@WestMidRailway

DEVELOPER FORCED TO STUMP UP FOR BYPASS

A logistics developer has agreed to pay for and deliver the first phase of a bypass after Northamptonshire County Council lost its funding for the project.

Jonathan Wallis, Development Director of DB Symmetry, told delegates that the company is taking over the project so that it can deliver the plans for its Symmetry Park at Kettering, which contains plans for 2.3m sq ft of logistics space.

Northamptonshire has lost its Local Enterprise Partnership funding for the bypass. DB Symmetry now expects to start work next year on the stretch of the bypass, running from the entrance of Symmetry Park to the A14. He said:

RATHER THAN PROVIDE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BYPASS, WE ARE DELIVERING THE FIRST PHASE. THIS GIVES NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO COMPLETE IT, WHICH HOPEFULLY WILL HAPPEN.



Wallis said that even though the site is allocated for employment in the council's local plan, securing planning permission for the park has taken three years due to a "considerable amount of opposition" to the scheme from residents in a neighbouring village: "With big projects there is such a focus on infrastructure that unless public and private work together, it won't get delivered."

But he said that the company's Symmetry Park at Rugby, which is located between Rugby and the A45 has attracted more enquiries than any other site in the company's portfolio due to planning restrictions on employment land in the surrounding area.

THE FOCUS TO DATE HAS LARGELY BEEN ON HOUSING GROWTH, IGNORING EMPLOYMENT NEEDS. I HOPE THIS IS SOMETHING THAT WILL CHANGE GOING FORWARD

he said, expressing hope that the scheme to deliver 2m sq ft of logistics space and over 2,000 new homes on 358 acres of land will receive planning permission following the adoption of Rugby council's local plan.

Wallis also showcased DB Symmetry's National Rail Freight Interchange at Hinckley, which will include 7m sq ft of logistic space and where it will be possible to load and unload freight from mainline trains to lorries.

He said the scheme, which covers more than 550 acres at junction 2 of the M69, is classified as a "nationally significant infrastructure project" and is "central" to plans to develop new homes and employment south of Leicester including a new garden village.

Anne Shaw, Director of Network Resilience at Transport for the West Midlands (TfWM), told delegates that the authority



Using batteries would avoid the need for overhanging catenary wires to power the trams through in the city centre, she said, adding that the transport body is exploring the use of hydrogen technology to power its buses.

Shaw also said new rail services are being introduced including a new station at Selly Oak that will relieve pressure on the existing but overcrowded station at Birmingham University.

Christopher Blake, New Stations & Services Manager at operator West Midlands Trains, said new commuter services on the Camp Hill Chords will deliver three new stations in south Birmingham. The new line will improve connections with the city centre and via the junction at Kings Norton link up with the wider rail network to the south west of the city.

He also said the provision of new stations at Darlastone and Willenhall which is being part bankrolled by HS2 Connectivity Fund, will be a catalyst for the regeneration of the surrounding Black Country area between Walsall and Wolverhampton.

Stephen Chaytow, Chair of the Manchester & East Midlands Rail Action Partnership, outlined his body's plans to create a new link between Manchester and Sheffield on the long-closed Peaks and Dales line.

He said the Hope Valley line, the existing main trans-

is hoping to run battery powered trams through Birmingham city centre as part of its plans to treble the size of the Midland Metro.

The region's tram network is currently being extended from New St Station through Birmingham city centre's business quarter to Hagley Rd in Edgbaston. TfWM is also seeking funding to further extend the network to Dudley.

Pennine route is "crowded" with services between the east midlands services and Manchester currently having to reverse when they reach Sheffield, leading to delays.

He said that Transport for the North has asked the partnership to prepare an outline business case for its proposals, which the group also hopes will be incorporated into the next refresh of the Midlands Connects strategy document.

Adnan Saif, West Midlands Director of the Canal & River Trust, told delegates that many developers continue to turn their back on the region's waterways. He said an example is in the Black Country, where 42% of development sites pipeline are located within 100m of canals.



Saif said that the region's 1,700 km of waterways and 1,900 km of towpaths, provides five traffic free routes into Birmingham city centre. He said regional water companies plan to use the trust's waterways to transfer enough water from the midlands to London to supply approximately 500,000 people.

The trust's 245 Ml/d transfer to Bristol Water is the second largest currently carried out in England.



Local Enterprise Partnership; Their role and vision for the future

Panel Members:



Chair: Phil Laycock

Director, Built Environment
Networking

@BENetworking



Paula Deas

Operations Director,
Coventry & Warwickshire LEP

@CW_LEP



Tom Goshawk

Capital Projects Manager,
D2N2 LEP

@D2N2LEP



Stuart Emmerson

Inward Investment Manager,
Worcestershire LEP

@worcsLEP



Paul Edwards

Head of Strategy, Greater
Birmingham & Solihull LEP

@GBSLEP



Sarah Middleton

Managing Director,
Black Country LEP

@blackcountrylep

LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP ISSUES PLEA FOR FUNDING CERTAINTY

Local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) require longer term funding certainty from the government in the upcoming spending review to continue making progress.

Sarah Middleton, Chief Executive of the Black Country LEP, told delegates that there are “lots of fantastic projects” under way across the midlands. As an example of the progress that has been achieved by her own LEP, she pointed to enterprise stock in the Black Country, which she is at its “highest” level since 2004.

But the lack of funding certainty for LEPs beyond 2021, which is when their current allocations runs out, is causing headaches, said Middleton:

THERE IS DEFINITELY MOMENTUM BUT WITH THE UNCERTAINTY AROUND BREXIT, THEY NEED NOW TO SEE GREATER CERTAINTY. TIME IS TICKING AWAY ON THE PUBLIC FINANCES: BY THE END OF THIS YEAR WE NEED TO SEE SOME BUDGETING HAPPENING.

“Having built up a fantastic pipeline of things we want to invest in, it would be a real shame for that to be impacted by not being able to do that development work and not knowing what the funding is beyond 2021. Both public and private sector resilience to the situation is getting thin and we need an outcome so we can have some certainty going forward.”

But Paul Edwards, Head of Strategy at the Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP, played down the impact of Brexit, which he described as a “bump in the road” that is not going to change his body’s strategy.

Tom Goshawk, head of capital programmes at the D2N2 LEP, showcased several development projects that the organisation is carrying out in its area covering Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.



These include a £2m injection of local growth funds into the Buxton Crescent project, which is renovating a grade 2 listed building in the Derbyshire spa town to create the Peak District’s first five-star hotel.

He said the LEP is also contributing £8.1m worth of funding to purchase land and demolish existing space to pave the way for the comprehensive regeneration of the Becketwell site in Derby city centre.

He said that projects like these are designed to help deliver D2N2’s strategy to lift the area into the top quartile of productive economies in Europe.

Stuart Emmerson, Inward Investment Manager at Worcestershire LEP, said that its booming digital sector had recently attracted a business from Silicon Valley to what the county has been branded its own ‘Cyber Valley’.

He also said the revamped Worcester Parkway station, which is due to come online later this year, will reduce journey times to both London and Birmingham, unlocking opportunities to the south of the cathedral city.



And he said the Worcester 6 business park has already attracted number of high-profile companies including Siemens.

Paula Deas, Operations Director at the Coventry & Warwickshire LEP, said that her LEP’s successes include securing £100m towards the UK Battery Innovation Centre.



A view from



EMBRACE THE MIDLAND'S POTENTIAL

It's an exciting time to be a proud Midlander – the state of the area based on Deloitte Crane survey, JLL forecast and Savills projections for Birmingham all indicate unprecedented levels of construction and development. Investment for delivery of infrastructure is accompanying this and is further substantiated by the profile associated with Coventry as the City of Culture in 2021 and Commonwealth Games in 2022 – both of these are attracting substantial central government funding which is a catalyst for growth, investment and regeneration; not to mention HS2!

There is clearly an ongoing challenge to get one voice speaking collectively for the region, but through the collaborative intentions of those representing our region, it is clear that we are heading in the right direction – Team Midlands is the voice that is needed. Establishing what this one voice needs to say is also work in progress, however, it was clear that this needs to capitalise on our tradition of our strong track record for high quality, skilled and progressive approach. With nearly 20 universities in the Midlands, and over 350,000 students, we have a student market to make a significant contribution to our economy and this is the prime opportunity to ensure we are the “Knowledge Capital”. Attracting and retaining these students is also competitive, which is demonstrated in the substantial investment that our universities are making to provide accommodation and state-of-the-art facilities. Furthermore, in retaining our skilled workforce, we need to ensure we are creating places where graduates and apprentices can continue their innovative research from comfortable surroundings, and in some instances, retain the principle of shared living.



With various 5G testbeds operating across the region, we are also at the epicentre of technological change and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. CWLEP and D2N2 have secured nearly £400 million to support this and the creative sector. Integrating this technology into our development projects and infrastructure will help our future workforce and population be effective and efficient, and should be used to help overcome the challenges of social exclusion and improve mobility to jobs, skills and services.

The opportunity and benefits of delivering HS2 (both to Birmingham and the East Midlands and then to Manchester and Leeds) continue to be reinforced; increasing rail capacity for local access (such as East Birmingham), intercity connectivity (Birmingham – Coventry – Milton Keynes), and additional capacity for moving freight around the UK – it was suggested that maybe it should be called High Capacity 2 rather than being solely focused on speed. In Birmingham, the investment around Eastside reinforces the points that have been spoken about for the past few years – HS2 creates development opportunity and this is now being realised. The development around Toton is also key to continuing economic growth of the Midlands. The recent Midlands Connect publications on the opportunity to improve rail connectivity between East and West Midlands reinforces the importance of being able to move goods and create economic activity across the Midlands.

The passion, drive and vision for those responsible for delivering sustainable, economic growth in the Midlands was evident throughout the conference, as a place to live, learn and do business.



Universities; Estate plans & supporting growth

Panel Members:



Chair: Phil Laycock

Director, Built Environment
Networking

@BENetworking



Julie Stone

Associate Vice-Chancellor,
University of Derby

@DerbyUni



Prof Nigel Wright

Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Research & Innovation,
Nottingham Trent University

@TrentUni



Prof Ian Marshall

Deputy Vice Chancellor,
Coventry University

@covcampus



Grant Bourhill

Chief Executive – Science
Parks and Interim Director
Research & Enterprise,
University of Leicester

@uniofleicester



Mark Smith

Executive Director of
Business Engagement,
Aston University

@AstonUniversity

BREXIT COLLAPSE IN EU STUDENTS WILL FUEL SKILLS GAPS

A drop in the number of EU students attending UK universities could open big skills gap in large areas of the economy like construction, our event has heard.

Speaking on the panel of the Universities session at the MDC, Prof Ian Marshall, Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Coventry University, said: “The changes Brexit could introduce to the university sector could be very significant. The university sector brings in large number of undergraduates and postgraduates from the EU who fill skills gaps all over the place.

“WHATEVER THE (BREXIT) DECISION, IT MAY BE THAT WE SEE UP TO 100% OF EU STUDENTS GO ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE QUITE QUICKLY AND SO WILL SEE A HUGE DROP IN PEOPLE IN CONSTRUCTION AND ENGINEERING.”



Universities are looking at whether they are diversified enough to sustain themselves in the future with some taking “hard decisions” to pull out of international collaborations because they are no longer perceived as “profitable”.

Grant Bourhill, Interim Director of Research & Enterprise at University of Leicester, said the university sector is experiencing a time of “unprecedented uncertainty”, which may prompt changes in business models, such as his own university’s venture at Space Park.

Professor Nigel Wright, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research & Innovation at Nottingham Trent University, said: “For many the sector is already challenging and will become more challenging.”

“The international market will continue to grow because the middle classes are growing,” he said, adding that he welcomed the publication of the government strategy for developing global education and attracting students to the UK.

Julie Stone, Associate Vice-Chancellor at Derby University, agreed.



“THE UK’S HIGHER EDUCATION REPUTATION WILL REMAIN STRONG OVERSEAS AND IS SEEN AS WORLD CLASS EDUCATION, BUT WE WILL HAVE TO BE AGILE.”

She also said that the university’s own estates strategy, which is currently under discussion, must be ‘future proofed’ to enable more flexible space: “We’ve seen huge growth in Derby over the last couple of years: we need to be far more agile than we have been in the past”

Mark Smith, Executive Director of Business Engagement at Aston University, said that his own institution has an increasing need for more technical facilities and laboratory space:

“THERE ARE CHALLENGES ROUND MAKING SURE THAT LABORATORY SPACE IS SUITABLE FOR 21ST GOING INTO THE 22ND CENTURY.”

Universities will require fewer large lecture theatres because of changes in the way that students want to learn, said Coventry’s Marshall: “If we look at how students want to learn, it’s less about sticking them in a 300-seat lecture theatre. We may have a place for the odd lecture theatre, but most want social learning or working in groups: less of the sage on the stage and more facilitating learning.”

Unfortunately, we keep changing the way we want to teach and what researchers want to do he said, adding that the future estate should be based not just on what is needed today but the requirements in 20 to 30 years.

Marshall said that over the last decade, the doubling in size of the number of students at the university from 17,000 to 34,000 had resulted in the redevelopment of large parts of Coventry city centre. He said that one in 25 jobs in Coventry are related to the university, contributing £2bn into the west midlands economy.



Leicester’s Bourhill gave delegates an update on progress at the Space Park, which the university is developing and a mile and a half north of Leicester on a site that is “very close” to the National Space Centre. He said the park’s first phase, the Earth Observation Data hub, is due to open in the fourth quarter of 2020.

And he said that funding is being sought for the second, the METEOR Centre for research into AI and robot-assisted low-cost satellite production. In addition, the Midlands Engine had identified the third building, the Low Cost Access to Space (LoCAS) factory, as a priority project.

Bourhill said the new park is designed to help deliver the UK’s ambition to capture 10% of the global space market, which is expected to grow 80% to £400bn by 2030, by specialising in the development of low weight satellites.



Placemaking; Housebuilders & Developers

Panel Members:



Chair: Carl Potter

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NEW REGIONAL DESIGN BLUEPRINT DRAWN UP FOR COMBINED AUTHORITY SCHEMES

A regional design charter is being drawn up by the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Patricia Willoughby, Head of Housing & Regeneration Policy at the WMCA, revealed during the placemaking session at the MDC that mayor Andy Street's body is working on the production of a regional design charter.

The charter would be used in tandem with the authority's own powers and land ownership to deliver an "unswerving focus on quality and innovation", she said: "Numbers aren't enough, we need to deal with quality, choice and methods of construction."



Willoughby said the charter would set out important place making principles to apply when assessing grant applications. But she said the authority is not starting from scratch by developing its own design principles but would seek to work up existing best practice.

Willoughby also said the WMCA's One Public Estate initiative would be

extended to incorporate a further 27 public sector organisations.

She said that the housebuilding rate within the combined authority area is four times the national average, with delivery up to 14,000 per annum compared to a target of 16,000.



Willoughby also stressed the importance of remedying skills gaps so that people do not have to be imported from other parts of the UK to fill the opportunities being created by the region's development.

Also addressing the skills issue, Rachel Wood, Managing Director of Sladen Estates, told the session that the developer has decided not to work with sub-contractors and contractors who do not use BIM: "Things are moving so fast. It is important to have the right team with right technology and being open minded about where we are going. It's very important to have the right team to deliver."

She also said that the east midlands-based developer is sensitive to construction costs when undertaking projects:

WE HAVE TO BE REALISTIC ABOUT WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE: IF WE DON'T BELIEVE WE WILL GET THE RIGHT BUILD COSTS, WE WON'T LOOK AT SOMETHING.

Addressing wider challenges to development, the impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU could not be ignored, Wood said: "Brexit is having a major impact on construction and development. It needs to be addressed if the midlands is to maintain economic growth."

Viability is another headache for Sladen, she said: "Land costs are racing ahead, particularly on industrial and distribution side. Build cost and rental values are not keeping pace to assist viability."

And Wood said the planning process is not delivering land quickly enough. As an example, she pointed to the company's plans for Bicester Office Park, where Sladen is still negotiating with the local authority more than 12 months after submitting a planning application for more than 60,000 sq m of offices on 35 acres.

And the company has to spend £160,000 after great crested newt DNA was detected at Summit Park, a 52-acre greenfield site by the M1 in Mansfield, even though none of the protected creatures have been found.

She said Sladen is in discussions with potential occupiers about the site where it has secured planning permission for industrial development and distribution sheds.

Two speculative sheds have been completed at the scheme, which suffered another blow when a sub-contractor went bust following payment problems on a previous project, Wood said:

WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE THAT WHOLE TEAM IS ABLE TO DELIVER WHICH IS VERY DIFFICULT TO PLAN IN SOME INSTANCES.

Chris Henning, Corporate Director for Development and Growth at Nottingham City Council, said the authority has just granted planning permission for mixed use development on the 40 ha Island site, which is being lined up for a new urban village and high-quality hotel.

The council is keen to encourage more overnight stays in the city, which tend to generate £100 per night for the local

economy than day trips, he said:

WE NEED TO TURN NOTTINGHAM FROM A CITY WHERE PEOPLE COME TO SHOP TO SOMEWHERE PEOPLE COME TO STAY.

Henning also said Nottingham has developed a supplementary planning document to help developers to identify opportunities on land by the river Trent, which has traditionally been a location for low grade industrial land.

Rob Valentine, Director of Bruntwood, said that a new vision is being worked up for Digbeth, the east Birmingham district that sits next to the site of the planned new HS2 station at Curzon St.

He said that the vision is seeking to capitalise on the inner-city neighbourhood's rich legacy of canals with new river markets and reactivating waterfront buildings to create spaces for musical and artistic events.

When developing its plans to turn a science park in the edge of city centre area into its new Innovation District, Bruntwood has been inspired by developments like 22@Barcelona and closer to home Bournville in south Birmingham, Valentine said: "The ethos of what the garden city was aiming to achieve still stands and its exactly what we want to achieve: the Bournville model is a great example of the catalyst that enables people to enterprise and thrive."



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08:00 – 17:00

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