



Lancashire
Enterprise Partnership

PR and Comms Activity Report

July-December 2023

July 2023 – Growing Places Fund Campaign

- Marketing, PR and comms activity to increase awareness of Growing Places Fund (GPF)
- Used 10th anniversary to highlight major schemes supported by GPF since inception
- Used current projects to highlight scheme was still active, and open for business
- Case studies and testimonials also used to populate new client-facing GPF marketing collateral
- Worked with latest GPF recipient, the Ormskirk Court Hotel, to promote enabling impact of the fund on stalled developments via local and regional press stories
- NB GPF's new collateral and messaging was deliberately crafted to deter applications for schemes that wouldn't fulfil GPF's social value/community economic impact criteria
- Since July's PR & comms awareness campaign, the GPF scheme has received credible loan enquiries worth over £13m



GROWING PLACES FUND



For the last ten years, Lancashire's Growing Places Fund (GPF) has helped investors, developers, and entrepreneurs turn their business ideas into reality.

By supporting projects and schemes which add value to the regional economy, and local communities, the GPF also helps to drive regional growth and boost prosperity across the county.

The GPF was initiated by the government, and is managed by the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

What is the Growing Places Fund?

Put simply, the GPF lends money to companies who require funding for local property schemes, infrastructure projects, and other inward investment activities, which have the potential to boost the Lancashire economy.

Typically, these are developments where there is a funding gap in the

project's overall finance package which mainstream funders (such as banks) are reluctant or unable to fill. When that happens, companies can apply to the GPF for a loan (usually between £75k - £2m) which is subject to an interest rate of 3% (or above the Bank of England's base rate).

What type of projects are eligible?

GPF is most often used to help stalled or blocked property schemes (both residential and commercial) move forward. But it can also be used to support other types of inward investment activity such as R&D facilities, enabling transport infrastructure interventions, and high value, niche use projects. However, to be successful, applicants need to demonstrate how their development will bring wider economic and community benefits to the area.

This can be through creating new jobs, attracting new investment, bringing new, innovative products to market, or utilizing low carbon technologies generating social value and boosting the prosperity of local people in the process.

The scheme must also be based in Lancashire.

How can I ensure my project generates local benefits?

Applicants unsure about how/if their proposal will offer wider social and economic benefits could explore how their scheme might complement other current inward investment programmes which are already backed by government. These include Town Deals, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and the Levelling Up Fund.

Opportunities linked to major countywide investments - such as Eden Project, Macclesfield, Lancashire Central, the National Cyber Centre (at Salford), and the county's four Enterprise Zone Sites - could also fit well with the GPF criteria.

How proposals align with Lancashire's overarching social, environmental and economic priorities - such as the county's commitment to net zero and inclusive growth (as outlined in the Lancashire 2050 plan) - are also key considerations when GPF applications are assessed.

Ensuring how your project integrates with local authority property masterplans, and/or more localised inward investment strategies, might also be useful.



Lancashire Enterprise Partnership

An Introduction to Lancashire's Growing Places Fund

WHO HAS IT ALREADY HELPED?

Since starting in 2013, the GPF has already invested over £40m in developments of all types and sizes across the county, which in turn has generated £100m of private investment and supported over two thousand new jobs. Just some of the schemes the fund has supported include:



UNION CARRIAGEWORKS

PRESTON

A former Victorian carriage manufacturing works in Preston city centre was successfully transformed into an apartment and office mixed-use scheme with help from the Growing Places Fund.

The company behind the project, Etc Urban, was a new entrant in the property market.

Further, when their plans were first put forward, Preston's city centre wasn't considered to be a viable residential location.

These factors, combined with it being a potentially complex conversion, meant mainstream funders were reluctant to support the project.

However, the LEP saw the potential of the proposal, and offered Etc Urban a £2.1m GPF loan.

As a result, 1,800 sqm of derelict city centre real estate was transformed into 18 New York style apartments over three floors, together with 345 sqm of new Grade A ground floor office space, and 10 underground parking spaces.



Lancashire Enterprise Partnership



LANGROYD PLACE

COLNE

The Growing Places Fund recently enabled the completion of 23 new homes in Colne.

Developed on a brownfield site by Barnfield Construction, in partnership with Pendle Borough Council, the housing stock includes two and three bedroom houses, together with several bungalows.

Even though there was high demand for new homes in the area, the developers struggled to find a mainstream lender prepared to back some elements of the Langroyd scheme.

At this point, the developers applied for £1.5m GPF funding, which was agreed.

This finance was used to cover not only 70% of the building costs, but also to pay for the planning, surveyor, architect, legal and agent fees, without which the project would never have got off the ground.



CATHEDRAL QUARTER

BLACKBURN

Prior to 2015, Blackburn Cathedral Quarter was a 25,000 sqm rundown and dysfunctional urban district on the edge of the town centre. Now it's a vibrant and mixed-use neighbourhood featuring a six storey Grade A office building, a 60 bed Premier Inn, and popular retail/hospitality units where operators like Starbucks and Turtle Bay have opened.

When looking at success of the project today, it's hard to contemplate how much of a challenge getting all the finance in place was for developers, Maple Grove Developments.

With mainstream banks not prepared to lend on such schemes at the time, Maple Grove found they had a significant funding shortfall which had to be filled for the scheme to progress.

They then turned to the Growing Places Fund, which agreed to loan £4m to bridge the vital financial gap.

As a result, the Cathedral Quarter now not only boasts Blackburn's first BREEAM Excellent rated office accommodation, it has helped to revitalise the town centre, and boost the wider Blackburn economy.



BURNLEY BRIDGE

BURNLEY

Burnley Bridge today is a fully occupied 1m sq ft industrial park on the M65 Corridor.

But before 2015, the site was inaccessible from the motorway, and both a new bridge and a new road was required to make it a viable commercial location.

Despite having over £40m of funding secured, developers Shawbrook faced a funding gap to cover the cost of the bridge, and the adjacent road works.

The Growing Places Fund intervened, providing the £2.4m needed to cover the costs of the bridge and road, which in turn allowed the whole £50m project to move forward.

Burnley Bridge is now a highly investible destination which currently supports around 800 jobs and has helped add millions to the local economy.

The success of the initial scheme has now seen plans for a phase two development being brought forward.



ORMSKIRK COURT HOTEL

ORMSKIRK

The planned conversion of a historic magistrates' court in Ormskirk, from a dilapidated Victorian public building to a five-star 'Aparthotel', marks a major milestone for the West Lancashire town.

The Grade II listed building is being reimagined by Lancashire-based developers Walker Williams as the Ormskirk Court Hotel. Once complete, it will feature 23 premium apartments, a new fine dining restaurant, new car-parking spaces, and new extensive landscaping.

But despite the transformational nature of the scheme, the backing of the local council, and the outstanding track record of the developers, raising all the finance proved to be challenging.

Covering the cost of vital enabling works, the restoration of external stonework, the installation of new bathrooms and windows, and landscaping, was something mainstream lenders were not prepared to support.

This is when the LEP's Growing Places Fund stepped in. Now, thanks to a £1.5m GPF loan, the project is progressing, with completion due next summer.



HOW DO I APPLY?

If having read through this guide you believe you have a property development (or other investment opportunity) which could potentially qualify for an GPF loan, you can submit an expression of interest via a form hosted on the LEP's website.

From the information you provide, the LEP will review your proposal's commercial viability, and assess how it aligns to the wider social and economic objectives of the Growing Places Fund (as outlined above).

If your project successfully passes this initial stage, the LEP will then get in touch to discuss how you can progress your application.

For more information on the Growing Places Fund, or to submit an expression of interest, visit www.lancashirelep.co.uk/key-initiatives/growing-places

Alternatively, you can contact the Fund Manager, Sue Roberts, via email: Sue.Roberts@lancashirelep.co.uk

"We found that mainstream lenders were reluctant to fund some of the key enabling works required to get the Ormskirk Court Hotel project started. That's when we turned to the LEP's Growing Places Fund, and their response to our plan was incredibly positive. Without their help, the development may have struggled to get off the ground."

Max Walker-Williams, co-founder, Walker & Williams Ltd



Lancashire Enterprise Partnership

An Introduction to Lancashire's Growing Places Fund

New Growing Places Fund promotional booklet



CASE STUDY: Union Carriageworks, Preston



HELPING TO KICK START PRESTON'S CITY CENTRE LIVING REVOLUTION

New use of Preston's most distinctive listed-use city centre locations, the Union Carriageworks development on Caidhull Street was a former carriage manufacturing works.

Situated off Fishergate, the 125-year-old Victorian building - which had stood empty for decades - was within the Worsley Square Conservation Area, meaning any redevelopment had to be sensitive to its historic setting. In addition to the heritage challenges of the project, the developer The Urban was a new entrant to the property sector, and had no prior experience of delivering similar schemes.

With a complex site, and no tangible track record, The Urban struggled to find a bank prepared to finance the ambitious conversion.

However, with Preston being tipped to be an investment hotspot by property experts, and Preston City Council keen to develop an urban living strategy across the whole of the city centre, the

LGF's Growing Places Fund could see the potential of the proposal.

As a result, in 2018, the GPF completed the funding package with £2.1m of finance. This covered the complete refurbishment of the building, the creation of 18 New York style spacious apartments over three floors, 245 sqm of new Grade A ground floor office space, and 10 underground parking spaces.

CASE STUDY: Burnley Bridge, Burnley



BRIDGING A CRUCIAL FINANCIAL GAP FOR BURNLEY

A key strategic site on the M65 Corridor with planning permission for over 1m sq ft of industrial and manufacturing space, the first phase of Burnley Bridge, is now complete and occupied.

However, prior to 2015, the site was inaccessible from the motorway and had a new bridge and a new road now required to make the site commercially viable. Despite having over £40m of funding secured, the developers themselves still faced funding gaps to cover the cost of the bridge and road over the adjacent road works.

Without this enabling infrastructure, the scheme - which had the potential to support over 1,500 new jobs - could not proceed.

At this point, the Growing Places Fund came to the rescue, providing the £2.6m needed to cover the costs of the bridge and road, which, in turn, allowed the whole £10m project to move forward.

As a result of making the site accessible, Burnley Bridge is now a highly desirable destination which currently supports around 800 jobs, and helped to add resilience to the local economy.

Following the success of the initial site, a second scheme - Burnley Bridge South - now has planning permission, and is being brought forward.



CASE STUDY: Ormskirk Court Hotel, Ormskirk



BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO A HISTORIC ORMSKIRK BUILDING

The planned conversion of a historic magistrates' court in Ormskirk, from a dilapidated Victorian public building to a five-star 'Aparthotel', marks a major milestone for the West Lancashire town.

Despite the transformational nature of the scheme, the backing of the council, and the outstanding track record of the appointed developers, raising all of the finance proved to be challenging.

Furthermore, Ormskirk will gain a new, upmarket restaurant, and over 20 luxury apartments, which complement the council's overarching inward investment strategy for the town.


Adopted as part of the council's Transforming Ormskirk programme, which is designed to reinvigorate the town centre, the Grade II listed building is being reimaged by Lancashire-based developers Walk Williams as the Ormskirk Court Hotel.

Walker Williams, who specialise in contemporary boutique hotels, are creating 23 premium apartments (with a mix of 1-3 bedrooms), and fourteen new car parking spaces, on the site.

Covering the cost of vital enabling works, the restoration of external stonework, the installation of new bathrooms and windows, and landscaping, was something

Further, One Cathedral Square sits alongside a new 60 bedroom Premier Inn hotel, while adjacent is a new interchange which strategically sits to the town centre, and Blackburn's railway station.

Growing Places Fund Social Value Case Study: Cathedral Quarter, Blackburn



BLACKBURN'S CATHEDRAL QUARTER

The Lancashire Enterprise Partnership provided a Growing Places Fund (GPF) loan to support the delivery of the mixed-use Blackburn Cathedral Quarter development, led by Maple Grove Developments, with Eric Wright Construction the appointed contractor.

The £10m BREEM Excellent development, completed in 2017, aimed to create a vibrant mixed-use scheme to transform Blackburn's existing business and leisure offer, and generate a true sense of place for local residents and businesses.

The achievements secured by embedding social value principles through the project have enhanced and broadened the success of the project.

By using this approach, Maple Grove Developments have also been able to secure a range of additional benefits for the wider community.

DELIVERING SOCIAL VALUE TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES

In addition to economic benefits and regeneration, the scheme also supported the delivery of a wide range of social value. This included:


- 57.1% of spend with Lancashire-based supplier (equating to £8.4m)
- Supporting over 50 employment roles
- 7 apprentices working on the project, over a total of 185 weeks
- Careers presentation to 20 university-level students from Blackburn College
- Work experience for A-level college students from Cusworth
- Support to local community projects through 29 volunteer hours, and 645 to donations.

If you would like any advice on embedding social value within your Growing Places Fund project, please contact the Fund Manager, Sue Roberts: Sue.Roberts@lancashirelp.co.uk

For more details about the Growing Places Fund, how to apply, and make case studies of projects it has supported across Lancashire, visit www.lancashirelp.co.uk/key-activities/growing-places.



CASE STUDY: Cathedral Quarter, Blackburn



RINGING THE CHANGES IN BLACKBURN'S CATHEDRAL QUARTER

Blackburn Cathedral Quarter scheme sits in the heart of the town's Cathedral Conservation Area.

In 2015, and following major programme of sensitive structural alterations, building preservation, demolition, and landscaping, the 25,000 sqm site was completely transformed from a rundown district into a vibrant, mixed-use neighbourhood.

At the heart of the redevelopment is One Cathedral Square, a high-quality, six-storey office building offering 32,000 sq ft of Grade A office space over 6 levels. The site also features 5,000 sq ft of ground floor retail or hospitality units.

It has subsequently led on the whole of Blackburn - getting finance in place for the initial phase was a challenge for appointed developers, Maple Grove Developments.

Despite the overwhelming success of the project - and the positive impact it has subsequently had on the whole of Blackburn - getting finance in place for the initial phase was a challenge for appointed developers, Maple Grove Developments.

As a result, the Cathedral Quarter now not only boasts Blackburn's first Grade A, BREEM Excellent rated office accommodation - which is home to a range of professional services businesses - it has attracted prestigious food and drink outlets, and 20,000 sqm of public realm (including a new public square).

This in turn has helped to support over 200 jobs, bringing a massive boost to the local economy. A phase two development - featuring a second office building, Two Cathedral Square - has recently been granted planning permission, which will further enhance Blackburn's overachieving town's investment offer.

Further, One Cathedral Square sits alongside a new 60 bedroom Premier Inn hotel, while adjacent is a new interchange which strategically sits to the town centre, and Blackburn's railway station.

Another key element is Cathedral Court, the first cluster constructed in the country for over 100 years, will

CASE STUDY: Langroyd Place, Colne



KICK STARTING A PIPELINE OF NEW HOMES IN PENDLE

Lancashire Enterprise Partnership's Growing Places Fund recently enabled the completion of over 30 new homes in Colne.

Called Langroyd Place, the 32 dwellings, which include two and three bedroom houses together with several bungalows, were developed on a brownfield site on Skilgona Road by Hamfield Construction in partnership with Pendle Borough Council.

To help finance the much needed new housing stock in the area, Hamfield explored various options, but struggled to find a mainstream lender prepared to back the scheme.

That's when the developers turned to the Growing Places Fund, which agreed to lend £2.5m.

This finance was used to cover not only 70% of the building costs, but also to pay for the planning, surveys, architects, legal and agent fees, without which the project would never have got off the ground.

Beyond helping deliver 2,640 sqm of new accommodation in Colne, this scheme helped to regenerate the wider local housing market, and has contributed to a major pipeline of housing developments which are vital to Pendle's future.

The project has also demonstrated how brownfield land can be transformed into a thriving residential neighbourhood, with a mixture of tenures and high quality public realm, to support a better quality of life for local people.



New Growing Places Fund case studies + testimonials (including social value impact piece)

10th Anniversary Growing Places Fund PR story

NEWS / THE FUND THAT LIKES TO SAY YES

Lancashire's Growing Places Fund celebrates 10 years of 'filling the finance gap' on transformational property schemes across the county

The Lancashire Enterprise Partnership's Growing Places Fund, an initiative which lends money to developers to bridge vital funding gaps on major property schemes, is celebrating its tenth anniversary.

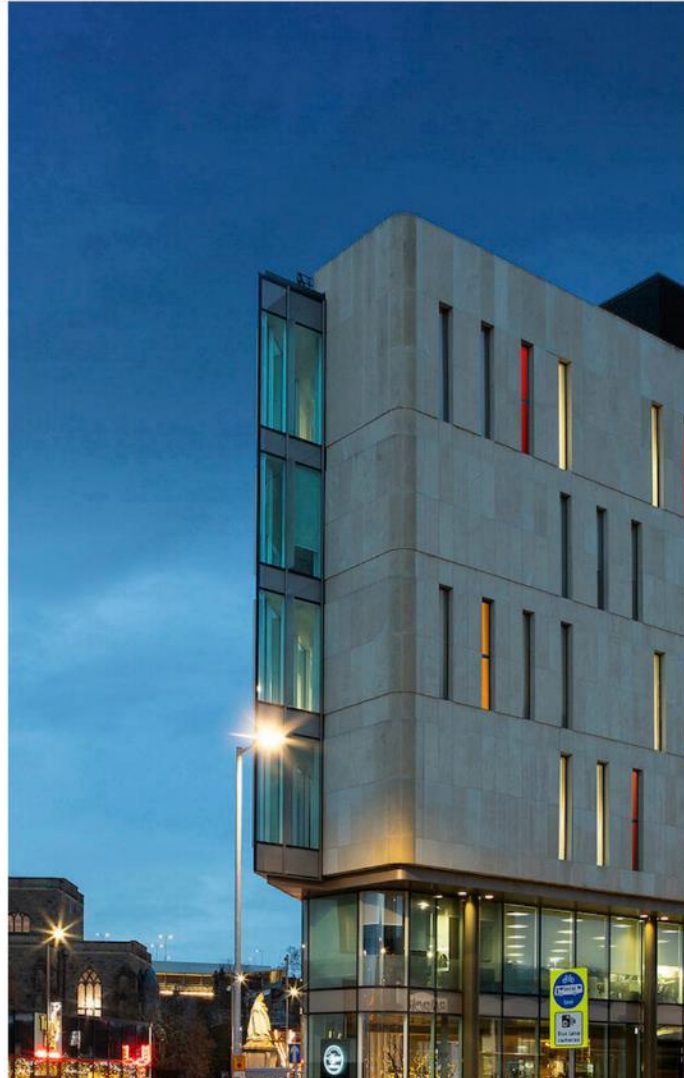
Since its inception in 2013, the government-backed programme has invested over £40m in developments of all types and sizes across the county. This in turn has unlocked a further £100m of private investment, enabled the delivery of nearly 800 new homes, and helped to create over 2,000 jobs.

Notable projects it has supported include Burnley's On the Banks, one of the largest heritage-led property schemes in the North West; the regeneration of the Chatsworth Gardens estate in Morecambe's West End; 30 new homes and public realm at Langroyd Place in Colne; and the 1m sq. ft Burnley Bridge industrial site.

The Growing Places Fund has also contributed to the success of two of Lancashire's most significant urban regeneration developments in recent years.

In Blackburn, the fund was utilised by Maple Grove Developments help bring forward the £20m Cathedral Quarter project which saw a run-down 25,000 sqm district transformed into a vibrant, mixed-used neighbourhood.

And in Preston, it was the Growing Places Fund which backed Etc Urban's ambitious plan to convert a former Victorian warehouse on Guildhall Street, off Fishergate, into The Union Carriageworks; a loft apartments and offices scheme which has been widely credited with kick-starting Preston's current city living movement.



New Growing Places Fund web copy

GROWING PLACES

The Growing Places Fund (GPF) supports infrastructure, commercial, industrial, retail, leisure and housing development across Lancashire - particularly in areas which face specific economic challenges.

For the last ten years, Lancashire's Growing Places Fund (GPF) has helped investors, developers, and entrepreneurs turn their business ideas into reality.

It lends money to companies who require funding for local property schemes, infrastructure projects, and other inward investment activities, which have the potential to boost the Lancashire economy.

Typically, these are developments where there is a funding gap in the project's overall finance package which mainstream funders (such as banks) are reluctant or unable to fill.

Since starting in 2013, the GPF has already invested over £40m in developments of all types and sizes across the county, which in turn has generated £100m of private investment, and supported over two thousand new jobs.

The GPF, which is managed by the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP), is still open to applications. To find out if your project might qualify, or for more information about the GPF, click [here](#) for an introductory guide to the fund.

You can also read about some of the schemes and projects that the GPF has supported [here](#), and there's a great example of how the GPF can drive local social value [here](#).

If, having read our [introductory guide](#) you believe you have a property development (or other investment opportunity) which could potentially qualify for an GPF loan, you can submit an expression of interest via the form below.

If your project successfully passes this initial stage, the LEP will then get in touch to discuss how you can progress your application.

Alternatively, you can contact the Fund Manager, [Sue Roberts](#)

FUND FOR PROPERTY DEVELOPERS CELEBRATES TENTH ANNIVERSARY



An initiative which lends money to developers to bridge vital funding gaps on major property schemes in Lancashire is celebrating its tenth anniversary.

Since the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Growing Places Fund was launched in 2013, the government-backed programme has invested more than £40m in developments of all types and sizes across the county.

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And in Preston it backed Etc Urban's ambitious plan to convert a former Victorian warehouse on Guildhall Street, into The Union Carriageworks.

The loft apartments and offices scheme has been widely credited with kick-starting Preston's current city living movement.

The fund continues to welcome applications from Lancashire businesses with viable proposals who find they have a gap in their financing.

The latest beneficiary is Walker & Williams, a Preston-based developer specialising in contemporary boutique hotels. It successfully applied for £1.6m of Growing Places finance to help bring forward the conversion of a historic magistrates' court in Ormskirk into a five-star aparthotel.

GROWING IN CONFIDENCE

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LANCASHIREBUSINESSVIEW

(print edition)

Ormskirk Court Hotel funding – regional media coverage

DEVELOPER SECURES SEVEN-FIGURE FUNDING FOR ORMSKIRK APARTHOTEL



Plans to convert the former Ormskirk Magistrates building into 23 luxury apartments are set to progress after a £1.6m loan was secured.

The refurbishment and extension to the original 1850s building is expected to cost around £3m and the hotel will support around 100 new jobs for the town. It is hoped the hotel will open before the end of next year.

Once complete, the boutique hotel on Derby Street will offer apartments complete with en-suite bathrooms, living space and kitchenettes. The old courtroom and cells will be transformed into a restaurant and bar called the Alibi, for use by guests and the wider community.

The new finance has been provided by the Lancashire's Growing Places Fund, which is managed by the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

Max Walker-Williams, Walker & Williams director, said: "I am thrilled the LEP has agreed to back this project through its Growing Places Fund, and that they recognise the huge benefits the redevelopment of the former court house will bring to Ormskirk. Not only will we revitalise one of the town's most beautiful historic buildings, we'll also provide new jobs for local people and create an exciting new destination for visitors and locals alike."

Debbie Francis, chair of the LEP, said: "The Growing Places Fund is designed to help kick-start new developments, or get stalled schemes back on track, which have the potential to generate both economic and social value to the wider community."

"By supporting the Ormskirk Court Hotel we are not only enabling the creation of local jobs, we are helping to boost the town's hospitality and leisure offer. It's also anticipated that the scheme will help meet Edge Hill University's need for more high-quality accommodation in West Lancashire, which will be another major benefit to the region."

Vincents Solicitors assisted aparthotel developer Walker & Williams in securing the loan. Corporate and commercial director Michael Sandys and commercial property director Craig Aikman provided support.

Craig Aikman, who has worked with Walker & Williams on two previous hotel acquisition and funding agreements, said: "We know the quality that Max and his team will deliver and it will be really exciting to see the hotel open and bring the boutique hotel experience to Ormskirk town centre."

LANCASHIREBUSINESSVIEW

Ormskirk hotel and bar plan back on track with £1.5m funding

As well as hotel rooms, the old courtroom and cells will be transformed into a restaurant and bar called the Alibi



Work is finally set to resume on plans to transform an historic former court building into a luxury hotel and restaurant.

New funding will allow the multimillion redevelopment of Ormskirk Court Hotel to become the latest aparthotel run by Northern firm Walker & Williams. The owners already run sites in Preston and Chester and have long been planning the Ormskirk opening.

Once complete, the boutique hotel will offer 23 luxury apartments complete with en-suite bathrooms, living space and kitchenettes. The old courtroom and cells will be transformed into a stunning restaurant and bar called the Alibi, for use by guests and the wider community.

The refurbishment and extension to the original 1850s building is expected to cost around £3m and the hotel will support around 100 new jobs for the town. It is hoped the hotel will open before the end of next year. Some concerns had been raised locally about the lack of progress but the owners have insisted they remained committed to the project.

Progress can now resume following the agreement of a £1.6m loan from Lancashire's Growing Places Fund, which is managed by the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Max Walker-Williams, Walker & Williams director, said: "I am thrilled the LEP has agreed to back this project through its Growing Places Fund, and that they recognise the huge benefits the redevelopment of the former court house will bring to Ormskirk."

"Not only will we revitalise one of the town's most beautiful historic buildings, we'll also provide new jobs for local people and create an exciting new destination for visitors and locals alike. I want to thank the LEP for their support, and the expert team at Vincents [Solicitors] for their tireless work in getting this agreement arranged so we can move forward with our plans."

Debbie Francis OBE, Chair of the LEP, said: "The Growing Places Fund is designed to help kick-start new developments, or get stalled schemes back on track, which have the potential to generate both economic and social value to the wider community. By supporting the Ormskirk Court Hotel we are not only enabling the creation of local jobs, we are helping to boost the town's hospitality and leisure offer."

Work to start on Ormskirk aparthotel



Work is set to start on the multimillion-pound conversion of a historic magistrates' court in Ormskirk to create a five-star aparthotel designed by FWP.

The development will see the transformation of the building into the Ormskirk Court Hotel, with 23 premium apartments, landscaping and car park facilities.

The ground floor will host a fine dining restaurant which will utilise the historic Courtroom 1, with drinks being mixed and served from the listed witness box.

Once the project is completed next spring it is anticipated the Ormskirk Court Hotel will support 59 new jobs and give a major boost to the West Lancashire town's hospitality and accommodation offer.

The development is being backed by £1.6m from the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership's Growing Places Fund, an initiative which lends money to developers to bridge funding gaps on major property schemes in the county.

The Walker & Williams Group is a family business created by Max and Laura Walker-Williams. The hotelier has been expanding its portfolio of five-star boutique aparthotels across the North West.

Operations director Max Williams added: "We have been busy securing a funding partner for the project to begin and ensuring that the design is the very best it can be with our architect partners FWP."

"We are proud to confirm we have secured a partnership with the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Growing Places Fund and are ready to begin this exciting project in Q4 this year."

insider

Transformation of former Mags' court to luxury hotel set to start



Work is set to get underway on a five-start aparthotel on the site of an historic magistrates' court in Ormskirk, West Lancashire.

The multimillion-pound scheme is designed by Preston-based FWP and will see the transformation of the building into the stylish Ormskirk Court Hotel, with 23 premium apartments, extensive landscaping, and new car park facilities.

The ground floor will host a fine dining restaurant which will utilise the historic Courtroom 1, with drinks being mixed and served from the listed witness box.

Once the project is completed next spring it is anticipated the Ormskirk Court Hotel will support 59 new jobs, and give a major boost to the town's hospitality and accommodation offer.

The development is being backed by £1.6m from the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership's Growing Places Fund, an initiative which lends money to developers to bridge funding gaps on major property schemes in the county.

The building, on Derby Street, had been a courthouse for 166 years before it closed its doors in 2016.

Architecture, design and masterplanning practice FWP has produced the aparthotel's designs for family-run hotel business Walker & Williams. It is the latest in a series of projects it has spearheaded for the company across the North of England.

Operations director, Max Williams, said: "We have been busy securing a funding partner for the project to begin and ensuring that the design is the very best it can be with our architect partners FWP.

"We are proud to confirm we have secured a partnership with the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Growing Places Fund and are ready to begin this exciting project in Q4 this year."

He added: "Ormskirk is in a fantastic strategic location between Liverpool, Southport and Preston. Although small, it has an affluent and growing population and university and we believe it represents an incredible opportunity for any solid brand offering real value."

TheBusinessDesk

Preston architect firm FWP to start work transforming historic Lancashire magistrates' court

Work is set to start on the multi-million pound conversion of a historic magistrates' court in Lancashire to create a five-star aparthotel designed by Preston firm FWP.

The development will see the transformation of the Ormskirk Magistrates' Court into the stylish Ormskirk Court Hotel, with 23 premium apartments, extensive landscaping, and new car park facilities.

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Once the project is completed next spring it is anticipated the Ormskirk Court Hotel will support 59 new jobs, and give a major boost to the West [Lancashire](#) town's hospitality and accommodation offer.

The development is being backed by £1.6million from the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership's Growing Places Fund, an initiative which lends money to developers to bridge funding gaps on major property schemes in the county.

Architecture, design and masterplanning practice [FWP](#) has produced the aparthotel's designs for family-run hotel business Walker & Williams. It is the latest in a series of projects it has spearheaded for the company across the North of England.

The Walker & Williams Group is a family business created by Max and Laura Walker-Williams that has been expanding its portfolio of five-star boutique aparthotels across the North West.

Operations director Max said: "We have been busy securing a funding partner for the project to begin and ensuring that the design is the very best it can be with our architect partners FWP.

"We are proud to confirm we have secured a partnership with the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Growing Places Fund and are ready to begin this exciting project in Q4, this year."

"We are looking forward to seeing Ormskirk Court Hotel open and welcoming restaurant customers and guests to such a historic building in beautiful Ormskirk town."

Former Magistrates building set for hotel revamp with £1.6m loan



Plans to redevelop a historic Magistrates building in Ormskirk into a hotel are set to progress following a £1.6m loan agreement.

Walker & Williams has secured the loan from Lancashire's Growing Places Fund, managed by the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP), which will be used to create the Ormskirk Court Hotel on Derby Street.

As part of the £3m plans, the former Magistrates building, which dates back to the 1850s, will be refurbished and extended to accommodate 23 luxury apartments complete with en-suite bathrooms, living space and kitchenettes.

The old courtroom and cells will be transformed into a restaurant and bar called the Alibi, for use by guests and the community.

The scheme could support about 100 jobs in the town.

Debbie Francis, chair of the LEP, added: "The Growing Places Fund is designed to help kick-start new developments, or get stalled schemes back on track, which have the potential to generate both economic and social value to the wider community."

"By supporting the Ormskirk Court Hotel we are not only enabling the creation of local jobs, we are helping to boost the town's hospitality and leisure offer. It's also anticipated that the scheme will help meet Edge Hill University's need for more high-quality accommodation in West Lancashire, which will be another major benefit to the region."

Craig Aikman, who has worked with Walker & Williams on two previous hotel acquisition and funding agreements, said: "We're pleased to assist our client in securing the Growing Places Fund loan which allows completion of the building project. We know the quality that Max and his team will deliver and it will be really exciting to see the hotel open and bring the boutique hotel experience to Ormskirk town centre."

BAROMETER

UP

▲ PHX Training has expanded its footprint by opening an office in Blackburn town centre, the company's eighth in the North West. The team has also secured a part of the Adult Education Budget for 2023 to help support people aged 19 and over acquire basic vocational and functional skills which can help them find work or improve their quality of life.



▲ Blackburn-based Vision Techniques has developed a new safety radar which it will install in all new waste collection vehicles it provides for Blackburn with Darwen Council. The radar gives drivers an audible and visual warning in advance of a collision and automatically applies the brakes if the driver doesn't respond.

▲ Accrington, Burnley, Darwen and Nelson - considered 'overlooked' by the government - will each receive £20m of Levelling Up funding over the next decade. Town boards will be set up to bring together community leaders, employers, local authorities and the local MP to deliver a long-term plan for their town. The funds will be accompanied by "a suite of regeneration powers" to unlock more private sector investment by auctioning empty high street shops, reforming licensing rules on shops and restaurants, and supporting more housing in town centres.

▲ Residential care, home care and dementia care specialist Townfield Care has secured a new £12m contract with Lancashire County Council, which will create 60 new jobs across Hyndburn, Rossendale, Burnley and the Ribblesdale Valley.

▲ After impressing the Department for Transport with significant improvements over the last 11 months, Avanti West Coast has now been handed a long-term rail contract of up to nine years. The company operates routes between Glasgow and Edinburgh and London. In Lancashire, it serves Blackpool North, Poulton-le-Fylde, Kirkham and Wesham, Lancaster and Preston stations.

▲ Skelmersdale-based Stuart Energy has recorded double-digit revenue and profit growth over the first half of the year. The generator specialist increased sales by 31 per cent in the first half of 2023 when compared to the same period in 2022. Net profit has also increased by over a quarter, reaching 26 per cent over the same period.

▲ The Annual Fundraising Ball held by Trinity Hospice at Blackpool Tower Ballroom has raised £100,431 for the Bispham based charity.

▲ Lancashire's Growing Places Fund, which is managed by the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, has provided a £1.6m loan towards the £3m cost of converting the former Ormskirk Magistrates building into 23 luxury apartments. The refurbishment has been designed by Preston based FWP and undertaken by developer Walker & Williams.

▲ A planning application has been submitted for a two-hectare site in Darwen to house a new manufacturing and research centre. The proposals have been put forward by a joint venture between the Barnfield Group and Blackburn with Darwen Council. The Chapels site would feature eight smaller industrial units alongside the main centre. Sheffield University's AMRC is in advanced talks to become the anchor tenant, with plans to house its first-of-its-kind Additive Manufacturing Accelerator there.

▲ An innovative property business committed to helping first time buyers has launched. Preston-based My First House offers affordable, modular homes to people looking to get on the property ladder.

▲ Blackburn College has launched a new facility to help it work closer with industry and to help deliver in-demand skills in tech, cyber security, health and engineering. The Industry Collaboration Zone (ICZ) provides a high-tech, central hub which businesses of all sizes, public bodies and other organisations can use to host their own events. It will also provide a base for the college to expand its own industry events programme and bring new co-working spaces to the town centre to support business start-ups. Students will be given the opportunity to network and learn from a range of business experts.



UNIVERSITY RISING TO LEVELLING UP CHALLENGE

It would make an interesting exam question. What is Edge Hill University's contribution to the UK economy?

The answer, according to a recent report, is a hugely impressive £175.9m. Nearer to home, the seat of learning on the outskirts of the metropolis of Ormskirk is also the biggest employer in West Lancashire.

The study by Turley Economics, commissioned by Edge Hill, has shone a light on the impact of the university in a region that the government is targeting in its 'levelling up' programme.

The report concludes that through its staff, students and visitors, the university plays a key role in driving economic growth, job creation and ground-breaking research.

Steve Igoe, Edge Hill's deputy vice-chancellor, says: "The expansion of our campus has helped to fuel economic growth not only in Ormskirk and West Lancashire but at a regional and national level.

"In the current climate it is also important to recognise the livelihoods Edge Hill supports through creating and supporting jobs and businesses.

"This is either through direct employment, the supply chain or through employee and student spending power. The economic and cultural contribution of our university is huge and benefits so many communities."

The university currently employs 2,025 members of staff, equivalent to 1,691 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. By 2030-31 it is anticipated that it will directly employ an additional 352 FTE workers.

The economic productivity Edge Hill supports a further 1,004 FTE jobs across the UK economy through its multiplier effects - generated by the institution's spending in its supply chain and through the re-spending of employee salaries.

Edge Hill has a student population of more than 14,600 which also makes a significant contribution to the economy.

This is seen through student spend, which currently stands at £83.8m per year. Also, through activities such as volunteering in the community, student social contributions are estimated at £10.7m.

The deputy vice-chancellor describes the Turley report as: "A clear statement of our intent to continue to actively nurture and develop our work to support the economy in years to come."

In line with that intent, by 2030-31 it is anticipated that the university will generate economic productivity impact of more than £211m.

He says: "In the last 10 years the university has invested more than £300m expanding and improving its outstanding facilities, student experience and research, while ensuring sustainability is at the heart of its activities.

"From the newly opened medical school to the forthcoming life sciences

building to support the STEM agenda, the university will continue to respond to the needs of the external environment and future employers to support the growth of the economy."

Edge Hill's importance to the local economy is also driving investment into the area. Walker & Williams, a Preston-based developer which specialises in contemporary boutique hotels, has brought forward the conversion of a historic magistrates' court in Ormskirk to create a five-star apartment. And it says that the pull of the university played a part in its decision to invest in the town.

Named the Ormskirk Court Hotel, this regeneration project will see the creation of 23 premium apartments, extensive landscaping, and new car park facilities. The ground floor will host a fine dining restaurant called The Alibi, which will be run by the team behind the Michelin Guide-nominated 263 Restaurant in Preston.

Once completed next spring, it is anticipated the Ormskirk Court Hotel, designed by Preston headquartered architecture, design and masterplanning practice FWP, will support 59 new jobs and give a major boost to Ormskirk's hospitality and accommodation offer.

The work will begin later this year after the developer successfully applied for £1.6m of finance from the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership's Growing Places Fund.

Walker & Williams co-founder Max Walker-Williams says: "We have been busy securing a funding partner for the project to begin and ensuring that the design is the very best it can be with our architect partners FWP.

"Ormskirk is in a fantastic strategic location, sitting between Liverpool, Southport and Preston.

"Although small, it has an affluent and growing population, a forward thinking local authority and huge investment by Edge Hill University.

"Ormskirk is an incredible opportunity for any solid brand offering real value. We are looking forward to seeing Ormskirk Court Hotel open and welcoming restaurant customers and guests to such a historic building."

The town's transport links were boosted earlier this year with the roll out of Liverpool City Region's new publicly-owned trains on the Ormskirk line of the Merseyrail network. The high-tech trains are part of a £500m investment in transport in the city region.

A modern new bus station also opened in the town in March, described as a major landmark in the progress of the £3.4m Ormskirk Eastern Gateway Project.

The project is a partnership between Lancashire County Council, West Lancashire Council and Historic England to upgrade the town centre and is focused on the area around St Helens Road, Moor Street and the bus station.

July – Lancashire Innovation Plan

- The LEP's Innovation Board sub-group published its new five-year plan in July
- Written by the LEP's comms consultant, Richard Bond, the Lancashire Innovation Plan was officially launched at Fraser House in Lancaster, as part of the inaugural FHunded 'meet the investor' event
- A regional PR campaign to promote the plan, and the significant role that innovation is set to play in the future Lancashire economy, was also undertaken
- This included securing an endorsement for the plan, and Lancashire's growing tech and digital investment potential, from northern tech venture capitalists Praetura Ventures
- The LEP was credited as the Innovation Board's overseeing body in all comms activity

NEWS / LANCASHIRE SETS OUT INNOVATION-LED BLUEPRINT FOR GROWTH WITH NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

The Lancashire Innovation Board, a Lancashire Enterprise Partnership sub-committee which helps develop and drive innovation strategies and initiatives across the county, has launched a new strategic plan.

Described as a 'blueprint for growth', and developed in partnership with Lancashire County Council and the county's leading

universities and innovation organisations, the *Lancashire Innovation Plan* (LIP) is built around four central pillars: Grow, expand, Connect, and Tell.

The Grow and expand pillars focus on maintaining, strengthening, and extending Lancashire's world-class capabilities in innovation-led sectors such as aerospace, advanced manufacturing, energy and chemicals. They also outline the need to maximise and broaden the county's R&D offer, and exploit new opportunities in emerging markets including electech, cyber, the digital industries, health, and low carbon.

These pillars also highlight the need to increase engagement with local businesses, and encourage more innovation-based growth across all sectors, and at all levels.

While both the Grow and Expand sections concentrate on boosting innovation capacity and networking activity within Lancashire, the Connect and Tell pillars are designed to drive engagement with external partners, national investors, and global markets.

Their activities also include closer strategic working with Lancashire's neighbouring north west regions, and across the UK, to develop more joint innovation opportunities.

Further, undertaking more communication and lobbying aimed at key influencers and policymakers, including central government, are set to be part of an overarching campaign to tell Lancashire's innovation story to the rest of the world.





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The LIP outlines the significant economic benefits which Lancashire can realise through its innovation pathways, and includes a series of enabling actions to help each pillar.

There are specific interventions designed to maximise assets like the North West, UCLan's Engineering Innovation Centre, and Lancaster as well as a proposal to establish a Lancashire Innovation Observatory to monitor commercial opportunities.

Other actions are centred around the identification and amplification of Lancashire's strengths and R&D specialisms which could help Lancashire position itself in high-growth and in-demand sectors.

Lancashire launches 'blueprint for growth' around four central pillars



A 'blueprint for growth' has been unveiled for Lancashire.

The Lancashire Innovation Board, a Lancashire Enterprise Partnership sub-committee which helps develop and drive innovation strategies and initiatives across the county, is behind the new strategic plan, developed in partnership with Lancashire County Council and the county's leading universities and innovation organisations.

The Lancashire Innovation Plan (LIP) is built around four central pillars: Grow, Expand, Connect, and Tell.

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BLUEPRINT FOR GROWTH LAUNCHED BY LANCASHIRE INNOVATION BOARD

19 Jul 2023 North West Business



A new strategic plan has been launched by the Lancashire Innovation Board, a Lancashire Enterprise Partnership sub-committee which helps develop and drive innovation strategies and initiatives across the county.

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Lancashire Innovation Board launches countywide strategic plan



Tech

by Chris Newbould July 19, 2023



Reading Time 3 mins

The Lancashire Innovation Board, a Lancashire Enterprise Partnership sub-committee which helps develop and drive countywide strategies and initiatives, has launched a new strategic plan.

Described as a 'blueprint for growth', and developed in partnership with Lancashire County Council and the county's leading universities and innovation organisations, the Lancashire Innovation Plan (LIP) is built around four central pillars: Grow, Expand, Connect, and Tell.

The Grow and Expand pillars focus on maintaining, strengthening, and extending Lancashire's world-class capabilities in innovation-led sectors such as aerospace, advanced manufacturing, energy and chemicals. They also outline the need to maximise and broaden the county's R&D offer, and exploit new opportunities in emerging markets including electech, cyber, the digital industries, health, and low carbon.

COUNTY'S INNOVATION BOARD PUBLISHES BLUEPRINT FOR GROWTH



The Lancashire Innovation Board has collaborated with the leading universities and innovation organisations across the county to publish a new strategic growth plan for the county.

The plan is a sub-committee of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, and it is built around four central pillars: Grow, Expand, Connect and Tell.

The Lancashire Innovation Plan (LIP) is built around four central pillars: Grow, Expand, Connect and Tell.


The pillars focus on maintaining, strengthening and extending Lancashire's world class capabilities in innovation-led sectors such as aerospace, advanced manufacturing, energy and chemicals. They also outline the need to maximise and broaden the county's R&D offer, and exploit new opportunities in emerging markets including electech, cyber, the digital industries, health, and low carbon.

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August – Proactive LEP Funding Response

- In August 2023, it was announced by letter that the government would cease to fund all of England’s LEPs from April 2024
- While a vast majority of LEPs chose not to comment on this news, Lancashire issued a statement which highlighted the vital contribution which LEPs like Lancashire’s continued to make to the regional economy
- It also talked about how important an independent ‘voice of business’ will be as part of any new local government arrangements going forward
- Our proactive approach, and forward-looking perspective, landed well with local and regional media, with Debbie’s quote also being specifically cited in a *Local Government Chronicle* comment piece
- The LEP’s positive legacy was also highlighted in a balanced editorial comment piece in Lancashire Business View which highlighted how in recent years it has achieved a number of significant outcomes for the county
- Across several pages of analysis, local business leaders were also asked by LBV to comment on the LEP and its legacy.
- Most were also broadly supportive, with the government’s original LEP model - and Lancashire’s fragmented geo-political landscape – being cited as barriers and challenges to LEP delivery from its inception



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities



Department for
Business & Trade

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To: LEP Chairs, Combined Authority Mayors,
Local Authority Leaders, and the Mayor of London

4th August 2023

Dear all,

**TRANSFER OF LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (LEP) CORE FUNCTIONS
TO COMBINED AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

At [Spring Budget 2023](#), the Chancellor announced that the Government was 'minded to' withdraw central government support (core funding) for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) from April 2024 and transfer their functions – namely, business representation, strategic economic planning, and the delivery of government programmes where directed – to local authorities, where they are not already being delivered by combined authorities or the Greater London Authority.

We wrote to you on 17th March 2023 to launch an information gathering exercise on the practical implications of this proposal. We would like to thank you for your participation in this. A [summary of the findings](#) has been published today on gov.uk.

Following the conclusion of this exercise, we are now writing to you to confirm our 'minded to' decision. From April 2024, the Government's sponsorship and funding of LEPs will cease. The Government will now support local and combined authorities to take on the functions currently delivered by LEPs. Where not already delivered by a combined authority, or in areas where a devolution deal is not yet agreed, the Government expects these functions to be exercised by upper tier local authorities, working in collaboration with other upper tier local authorities over functional economic areas as appropriate. Alongside this decision, we have published [technical guidance](#) for LEPs and local authorities to support them through this policy change.

The information gathering exercise identified overlap between some of the functions being discharged by LEPs, local authorities and combined authorities, as well as confirming that there is already a high level of integration of LEP functions in Mayoral Combined Authority areas. The exercise also highlighted the different perceived levels of benefit and engagement between LEPs and local authorities. The Government's

Warning 'crucial' Lancashire business expertise must not be lost as axe falls on Local Enterprise Partnership

Lancashire's business community must continue to have a voice in policies designed to deliver economic growth - if the county is to realise its full potential.



That was the message from the chair of the area's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) after the government announced that it was withdrawing funding for the network of 36 such organisations that exist across [England](#).

Debbie Francis expressed her disappointment with the decision, but stressed the need for continued co-operation with [Lancashire County Council](#), which - in common with other local authorities across the country - will assume LEP responsibilities and functions from next April.

Lancashire's LEP was established back in 2011 with a remit to boost the county's economy by helping to determine local economic priorities, improving infrastructure and increasing the skills of the workforce.

Like all LEPs, the Lancashire partnership is business led, with a board that is made up predominantly of representatives from the private sector, but also includes local authority and education figures.

Debbie Francis said that it was vital not to lose the collective benefits that have accrued over the 12 years of the LEP's existence

"While the government's decision to cease the funding of Local Enterprise Partnerships from April 2024 is disappointing, the need for business collaboration with local authorities remains crucial to enable the delivery of economic growth and prosperity in Lancashire.

"The business community's sector-specific and unique industry insights will help to ensure investment and policy interventions will have maximum impact which will benefit both residents and businesses as Lancashire realises its economic growth ambitions.

"As such, we are working closely with our public and private sector partners to ensure there remains a strong business voice, which builds on the LEP's significant expertise, experience, and legacy [and] will help inform Lancashire's future economic strategy," said Ms. Francis, a former managing director of rail freight operation Direct Rail Services.

In its rationale for removing the financial support it offers LEPs, the government said that there was "overlap" between some of the work being done by the organisations and the endeavours of local councils - especially in areas covered by mayor-led combined authorities.

Although Lancashire has collectively refused to commit to creating an elected mayor, it has recently stepped up its eight-year effort to secure a devolution deal from the government. The county was last month told by levelling up minister Dehenna Davison that there was now a Whitehall commitment to devolving power to Lancashire.

"Furthermore, economic prosperity and ensuring our residents have the skills they need to succeed are enshrined in the Lancashire 2050 framework, which is supported by all 15 of our county, unitary and district councils.

"With a devolution deal on the horizon later this year, we know our businesses have a pivotal role to play and we are determined to ensure they continue to have a strong and important voice as we shape our future, and that we support them as fully as possible," County Cllr Riggott said.

Since its inception, the Lancashire LEP has been responsible for a raft of initiatives, including overseeing delivery of the Preston, South Ribble and Lancashire City Deal - the £4,34m plan to create 20,000 new jobs and 17,000 new homes, in part by delivering major infrastructure projects like the [recently-opened Preston Western Distributor Road](#).

The partnership also drew up the evidence base for a local industrial strategy, when that was required by the government, before it was later replaced with a Covid-era "plan for growth".

Under the LEP umbrella, the Lancashire Skills and Employment Board was also established in 2013, with the aim of ensuring that the county's workforce is meeting the needs of employers. The organisation has focused particularly on delivering meaningful contacts between young people and businesses - often in the form of work experience or mentoring - and has secured [tailored careers support](#) for some of the county's most disadvantaged areas.



Call for co-operation after Lancashire enterprise body axe

COUNTY business chiefs have expressed their dismay after the government's announcement it was to withdraw funding for Lancashire's local enterprise partnership.

Leading figures in the LEP insist Lancashire's business community must continue to have a voice in policies designed to deliver economic growth.

Debbie Francis, LEP chairman, expressed her disappointment with the Whitehall decision but stressed the need for continued co-operation with Lancashire County Council, which will assume their responsibilities and functions from next April.

The county LEP was established in 2011 with a remit to boost the county's economy by helping to determine local economic priorities, improving infrastructure and increasing the skills of the workforce.

Like all LEPs, the Lancashire partnership is business led, with a board made up predominantly of representatives from the private sector, but also includes local authority and education figures.

Ms Francis, a former managing director of rail freight operation Direct Rail Services, said it was vital not to lose the collective benefits accrued by the LEP.

She said: "While the government's decision to cease the funding of LEPs from April 2024 is disappointing, the need for business collaboration with local authorities remains crucial to enable the delivery of economic growth and prosperity in Lancashire.

"The business community's sector-specific and unique industry insights will help to ensure investment and policy interventions will have maximum impact which will benefit both residents and businesses as Lancashire realises its economic growth ambitions.

"As such, we are working closely with our public and private sector partners to ensure there remains a strong business voice, which builds on the LEP's significant expertise, experience, and legacy [and] will help inform Lancashire's future economic strategy."

Government bosses say there is an 'overlap' between some of the work being done by LEPs and local councils – especially in areas covered by mayor-led combined authorities.

Lancashire has collectively refused to commit to creating an elected mayor but has recently stepped up efforts to secure a devolution deal from the government. Levelling up minister Dehenna Davison said last month there was now a Whitehall commitment to devolving power to Lancashire.

Under such proposals, a new combined county authority would be formed, on which there would be places for associate and non-constituent members – including from the business and education sectors.

County Cllr Aidy Riggott, cabinet member for economic development, said: "The county council has a strong and proud record of determining key economic priorities, driving growth and helping to create new quality job opportunities across Lancashire.

"Furthermore, economic prosperity and ensuring our residents have the skills they need to succeed are enshrined in the Lancashire 2050 framework, which is supported by all 15 of our county, unitary and district councils.

"With a devolution deal on the horizon later this year, we know our businesses have a pivotal role to play and we are determined to ensure they continue to have a strong and important voice as we shape our future, and that we support them as fully as possible."

Lancashire LEP has been responsible for overseeing enterprise zones like the one at Samlesbury and the Preston, South Ribble and Lancashire City Deal.

The partnership also drew up a local industrial strategy before it was later replaced with a Covid-era 'plan for growth'.

Under the LEP umbrella, the Lancashire Skills and Employment Board was also established in 2013, with the aim of ensuring the county's workforce is meeting the needs of employers.

The organisation has focused particularly on delivering meaningful contacts between young people and businesses – often in the form of work experience or mentoring – and has secured tailored careers support for some of the county's most disadvantaged areas.



Government confirms axe for Local Enterprise Partnerships



Levelling Up Minister Dehenna Davidson has written to the boards of the remaining Local Enterprise Partnerships confirming that funding for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) will end from April 2024 and strategic economic planning will transfer to councils and Combined Authorities.

In the letter seen by TheBusinessDesk.com the Government claim an information gathering exercise identified "overlap between some of the functions being discharged by LEPs, local authorities and combined authorities".

The Government confirms it will provide "some revenue funding to local and combined authorities" but is vague on the details.

It even encourages the successor bodies to involve specific named business representative organisations, "such as a local Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses". It also suggests a designated Employer Representative Body (ERB) develops the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

"The Government remains committed to our goal that by 2030, every area in England that wants a devolution deal will have one. By empowering local democratically elected leaders to deliver these key local growth functions from April 2024, we are accelerating the integration process set out in the Levelling Up White Paper."

An accompanying paper on transferring functions itemises each area, such as Growth Hubs, Towns Funds, and the remaining projects covered by the European Structural and Investment Funds – European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF).

In March Greater Manchester's economic strategy begun the process of being driven by a new Business Board, that looks remarkably like the Local Enterprise Partnership in composition.

The changes to local economic strategy were outlined in Jeremy Hunt's deeper devo announcement as part of the Spring Budget.

But it is in non-Combined Authority areas that the LEP structures will be most missed.

Government has also recommended that LEPs and local authorities seek their own legal advice on issues related to staff redundancies and TUPE to any new entities and that directors seek their own legal advice regarding personal liabilities.

Debbie Francis OBE, Chair of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, said: "While the Government's decision to cease the funding of Local Enterprise Partnerships from April 2024 is disappointing, the need for business collaboration with local authorities remains crucial to enable the delivery of economic growth and prosperity in Lancashire.


"The business community's sector-specific and unique industry insights will help to ensure investment and policy interventions will have maximum impact which will benefit both residents and businesses as Lancashire realises its economic growth ambitions.

"As such, we are working closely with our public and private sector partners to ensure there remains a strong business voice, which builds on the LEP's significant expertise, experience, and legacy, that will help inform Lancashire's future economic strategy."

Small firms' champion, the Blackpool-based Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), said SME support must not be left to fall through the cracks following decision to remove funding for Local Enterprise Partnerships

FSB national chair, Martin McTague, said: "Even though we knew this was on the horizon, the decision to remove all funding from LEPs is still disappointing.

"With economic growth stuck in the doldrums and small firms beset on all sides by cost pressures and falling demand, going ahead with this decision seems especially badly timed.



LEPs are a key ingredient in many local business ecosystems, providing resources, know-how, and practical solutions to small firms. The value they provide in return for their funding should not be underestimated, and the loss of the networks they facilitate will only become clear when it's too late to replace them."

He added: "A key characteristic of LEPs is that they are business-led. Local authorities should make sure that any business forum or council they set up using replacement funds from government retain that element, so that they are as responsive as possible to what local firms want and need.

"The Government should now publish an updated regional economic strategy detailing how small business voices will be included in future plans, and also how it plans to avoid small and rural town funding being dominated by local combined authorities, to the detriment of small firms based in rural settings.

"Access to support should be straightforward for all small businesses, so they can be helped to reach their full potential – something the economy desperately needs."

Clare Hayward, chair of the NP11 group of Northern LEPs and the Cheshire and Warrington LEP added: "We are keen for the Government to accelerate conversations with those parts of the North currently without a devolution deal to ensure all parts of our region can benefit from enhanced local decision-making and investment."

GOVERNMENT WILL END LEP FUNDING

Government funding of Lancashire's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) will come to an end next April, it was announced today.

The government says instead it will support upper tier local councils and, where there is a devolution deal, combined authorities to take on the functions currently delivered by England's 36 LEPs.

Those functions include business representation, strategic economic planning and the delivery of government programmes.

Debbie Francis, who chairs the LEP, described the government's decision to cease its funding as "disappointing".

She added: "The need for business collaboration with local authorities remains crucial to enable the delivery of economic growth and prosperity in Lancashire."

And she went on: "We are working closely with our public and private sector partners to ensure there remains a strong business voice, which builds on the LEP's significant expertise, experience, and legacy, that will help inform Lancashire's future economic strategy."

A letter from levelling up minister Dehanna Davison to LEP chairs, combined authority mayors, local authority leaders and the mayor of London was made public today. It spells out the government's plans.

It revealed that the government will provide "some revenue funding" to local and combined authorities in 2024-25 to support them in delivering the functions currently delivered by LEPs.

However, funding beyond 2024-25 is subject to "future spending review decisions".

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt announced in his March Budget that the government was looking at transferring the responsibilities of LEPs to local authorities.

That was followed by "an information gathering exercise" by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), which led to today's announcement.

In her letter, the minister said: "From April 2024, the government's sponsorship and funding of LEPs will cease. The government will now support local and combined authorities to take on the functions currently delivered by LEPs.

"Where not already delivered by a combined authority, or in areas where a devolution deal is not yet agreed, the government expects these functions to be exercised by upper tier local authorities, working in collaboration with other upper tier local authorities over functional economic areas as appropriate.

"The information gathering exercise identified overlap between some of the functions being discharged by LEPs, local authorities and combined authorities, as well as confirming that there is already a high level of integration of LEP functions in Mayoral Combined Authority areas.

"The exercise also highlighted the different perceived levels of benefit and engagement between LEPs and local authorities.

"The government's view is that there is likely to be scope for greater join-up, efficiencies, and clarity for the private sector by these functions being discharged within Mayoral Combined Authorities, devolution deal areas and upper tier local authorities, working together as appropriate."

There are three upper tier local authorities in Lancashire – the county council, Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen. They are currently involved in talks with the government aimed at sealing a devolution deal.

The minister added: "The government remains committed to our goal that by 2030, every area in England that wants a devolution deal will have one.

"By empowering local democratically elected leaders to deliver these key local growth functions from April 2024, we are accelerating the integration process set out in the Levelling Up White Paper."

Tim Oliver, who chairs the County Council's Network (CCN), said: "Today's decision by the government is a decisive one and very welcome, drawing a line under recent uncertainty and allows us to get on with integrating Local Enterprise Partnership functions into upper-tier councils and combined authorities."

He added: "While the government have clearly set out that LEP functions should be transferred to upper-tier councils, it still allows LEPs to continue to operate independently without government support.

"While recognising these are private enterprises which the government cannot abolish, this could create duplication and confusion locally, and therefore they should only continue to function following consultation with the relevant upper-tier council."

Lancashire's LEP, a strategic collaboration between business, universities and local councils, was formed in 2011, with a remit to direct economic growth and drive job creation. Since then it has played a central role in coordinating the county's economic priorities.

Debbie Francis, LEP chair, said: "While the government's decision to cease the funding of Local Enterprise Partnerships from April 2024 is disappointing, the need for business collaboration with local authorities remains crucial to enable the delivery of economic growth and prosperity in Lancashire.

"The business community's sector-specific and unique industry insights will help to ensure investment and policy interventions will have maximum impact which will benefit both residents and businesses as Lancashire realises its economic growth ambitions.

"As such, we are working closely with our public and private sector partners to ensure there remains a strong business voice, which builds on the LEP's significant expertise, experience, and legacy, that will help inform Lancashire's future economic strategy."

LANCASHIREBUSINESSVIEW

Leps' legacy and the pitfalls of pendulum politics

08 AUGUST 2023 | BY SARAH CALKIN

Though few in local government will mourn the demise of local enterprise partnerships, there have been some positives from the experience, writes LGC editor Sarah Calkin.

The demise of local enterprise partnerships, confirmed at the end of last week, was long expected. The 36 (originally 39) bodies have had a troubled life since their birth as a lovechild of the Coalition government, set up to replace New Labour's nine regional development agencies in 2011.

As a reaction to what both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats viewed as bloated organisations, costing too much money and employing too many staff, leps were intended to be smaller and more nimble organisations with running costs at least in part funded by the private sector. They are not statutory bodies, in some cases opting to be incorporated as companies, in others operating in much less formal structures. Boards were to be made up of 50% private sector representation.

Barely three years into their existence and they were reportedly at a crossroads, their future in doubt. A few years later they were flavour of the month again but performance has proved patchy when it comes to delivering economic growth and the National Audit Office has raised concerns about their transparency and accountability.

In 2015, as chief executive of Localis, Liam Booth-Smith, now the prime ministers' chief of staff, cited these [governance concerns](#) to declare leps "are not the right groups" for leading the task of producing industrial strategies.

So all in all it is little surprise that ministers last week confirmed they will press ahead with plans first announced at the Budget to cease funding them from next year with their functions transferred to combined authorities, in areas where they exist, and the upper tier authorities in areas where they do not.

The pendulum appears to have swung from ensuring the pre-eminence of the private sector in lep arrangements to handing the primacy back to the public sector.

Many combined authorities have already absorbed lep functions, their focus on skills, growth and transport along with their large footprints making them natural successors.

In the 10 leps that cover two tier areas yet to agree a devolution deal, the picture is less clear. Districts are understandably smarting at not receiving the merest mention in the guidance put out by the government about the changes, pointing out that functions such as planning and housing, which are crucial to economic growth, sit with them.

Looked at alongside the move to create county combined authorities allowing devolution deals to proceed without support or involvement of districts, one has to conclude that either the government does not understand the role districts play in a place, or it is giving them a not very subtle hint.

For the Lancashire and Greater Lincolnshire leps, where (most) councils are keen to agree a devolution deal, the issue may just be one of timing.

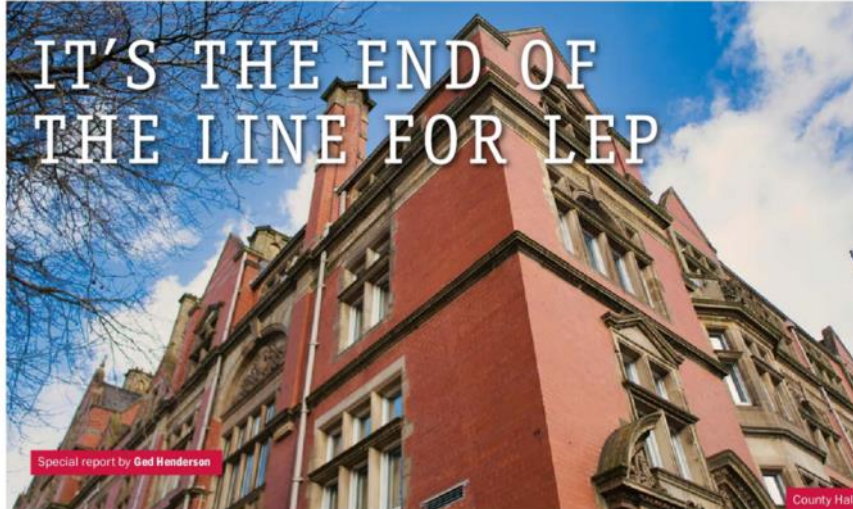
But for others, such as Heart of the South West covering Devon CC, Plymouth City Council and Torbay and Somerset Councils, it may be more complex.

Lancashire Enterprise Partnership chair Debbie Francis, who is a former managing director of rail freight operation Direct Rail Services, warned this week that the business voice must not be lost in the new arrangements.

Though leps may not have worked well everywhere, they have at least provided a formal route for the business voice to be heard in local democratic decisions making. Many would argue they more closely align with functional economic areas than the RDAs that preceded them.

Whatever happens next it would be wise not to let the pendulum swing too far.

IN VIEW



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The government says it will instead support upper tier local councils and, where there is a devolution deal, combined authorities to take on the functions currently delivered by England's 36 LEPs.

These functions include business representation, strategic economic planning and the delivery of government programmes.

The announcement was made in August and Debbie Francis, who chairs the LEP, responded by describing the government's decision to cease its funding as "disappointing".

She told Lancashire Business View: "The need for business collaboration with local authorities remains crucial to enable the delivery of economic growth and prosperity in Lancashire."

And she went on: "We are working closely with our public and private sector partners to ensure there remains a strong business voice, which builds on the LEP's significant expertise, experience, and legacy, that will help inform Lancashire's future economic strategy."

A letter from levelling up minister Dehanna Davison to LEP chairs, combined authority mayors, local authority leaders and the Mayor of London, which was made public, spelt out the government's plans.

It revealed that the government will provide "some revenue funding" to local and combined authorities in 2024-25 to support them in delivering the functions currently delivered by

LEPs. However, funding beyond 2024-25 is subject to "future spending review decisions".

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt announced in his March Budget that the government was looking at transferring the responsibilities of LEPs to local authorities.

That was followed by "an information gathering exercise" by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), which led to the final announcement.

In her letter, the minister said: "From April 2024, the government's sponsorship and funding of LEPs will cease. The government will now support local and combined authorities to take on the functions currently delivered by LEPs.

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Lancashire's LEP, a strategic collaboration between business, universities and local councils, was formed in 2011, with a remit to direct economic growth and drive job creation. Since then, it has played a central role in coordinating the county's economic priorities.

Debbie Francis, LEP chair, said: "While the government's decision to cease the funding of Local Enterprise Partnerships from April 2024 is disappointing, the need for business collaboration with local authorities remains crucial to enable the delivery of economic growth and prosperity in Lancashire.

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"As such, we are working closely with our public and private sector partners to ensure there remains a strong business voice which builds on the LEP's significant expertise, experience, and legacy, that will help inform Lancashire's future economic strategy."

Aidy Riggott, cabinet member for economic development and growth at County Hall, says Lancashire's business voice will continue to be heard.

He said: "The county council has a strong and proud record of determining key economic priorities, driving growth and helping to create new quality job opportunities across Lancashire.

"Furthermore, economic prosperity and ensuring our residents have the skills they need to succeed are enshrined in the Lancashire 2050 framework, which is supported by all 15 of our county, unitary and district councils.

"With a devolution deal on the horizon later this year, we know our businesses have a pivotal role to play and we are determined to ensure they continue to have a strong and important voice as we shape our future, and that we support them as fully as possible."

A strong finish after an uncertain start: page 9

Views from Westminster

TIME TO GRASP OUR OPPORTUNITIES

By Antony Higginbotham
Member of Parliament for Burnley



Earlier this year the chancellor announced he was minded to withdraw central government support for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) from next April. For us, it means the end of the Lancashire LEP.

Last month, this decision was confirmed. While LEPs have had successes since their inception in 2011, I have always been a sceptic. At times they felt bureaucratic and cumbersome and lacked the level of transparency I thought they should have, given the amount of funding directed through them.

For those businesses and organisations "on the inside" they worked well, but for the many small businesses that didn't have a foot in the door, who I speak to often, they offered less. This isn't any reflection on the excellent people who ran and worked in LEPs but is a broader reflection on the limits of unaccountable bodies.

Elected politicians at every level are accountable to the public – including the business community – for everything from regeneration and skills to health disparity, and so it is right that they hold a more formalised role. Accountability and responsibility should always go hand in hand.

With that in mind the government has, in recent years, shifted the funding model for projects away from LEPs and towards a system of working more closely with MPs

and local authorities. The Levelling Up Fund and Shared Prosperity Fund are two examples which are seeing tens of millions of pounds of investment being driven into Lancashire.

And with negotiations on a County Deal for devolution progressing well, this shift looks to be continuing in a way which could bring huge benefits for our area.

The remit of the LEP will, all being well, transfer to a new Combined County Authority. Whilst the full scope of powers for this body is yet to be established, it looks likely to cover economic development, housing, health, and more.

And because that is set-up to be a democratic and accountable body it will, by design, be closer to those on whose behalf it is working.

Over the last decade the LEP has made a real difference to our county. Regeneration projects are booming, and Lancashire is developing a name for itself.

With the arrival of National Cyber Force, the ramp up of design for the Future Combat Air System, the expansion of nuclear energy and so much more, our potential is huge.

Our collective task now, as MPs, councillors, business leaders, and anyone else we can mobilise, is to use the new structures being offered to grasp these opportunities.

A STRONG FINISH AFTER AN UNCERTAIN START

In 2010 the then coalition government's plan to replace regional development agencies with LEPs got off to a rocky start in Lancashire.

The fragmented nature of the county was laid bare for all to see when three separate local authority tenders for LEPs were submitted to Westminster.

Unsurprisingly the Lancashire County Council, Pennine Lancashire and Blackpool and Fylde bids were rejected, with ministers determined to see a single partnership encompassing the whole of the county.

That county-wide LEP finally saw light of day in 2011 with supermarket business boss Edwin Booth in the chair.

More controversy was to come in those early years. In 2014 the Samlesbury enterprise zone was branded as England's "worst performing" by government ministers who bemoaned the "slow" progress being made.

The local growth and enterprise zones ministers said the site was the only one not to make progress and questioned the LEP's ability to deliver it successfully.

Edwin Booth gave a full and robust response saying the plans remained on course and it would eventually build on the county's status as a world-class location for advanced engineering and manufacturing.

His assessment proved to be right on the money. Today the Samlesbury enterprise zone is home of the prestigious and highly prized

AMRC North West and British Aerospace's ASK training academy, with other major developments in the pipeline.

The LEP can point to a host of other achievements over its lifetime, putting those rocky early days well behind it.

Not least it has played a crucial role in coordinating the county's economic priorities and creating a narrative for investment.

It also played a key role in creating Lancashire's Covid recovery roadmap.

As well as securing the largest number of enterprise zone sites, the LEP negotiated the £450m Preston, South Ribble and Lancashire City Deal in 2013.

And it also delivered on the county's £320m Growth Deal, a key part of the Northern Powerhouse initiative. It contributed £1.2m from that deal to develop the game-changing Eden Project in Morecambe and has been a major partner in the drive to deliver the ambitious £100m visitor attraction.

The LEP also played its part in the partnership approach that is bringing the headquarters of the National Cyber Force to Samlesbury.

It has also worked with Boost on business support and has created and delivered nationally recognised and award-winning skills programmes including the Digital Skills Partnership, Careers Hub and Enterprise Skills Escalator.

The verdict on the LEP, page 10

IN VIEW

BUSINESS DELIVERS ITS VERDICT

We asked a range of business leaders to give their verdict on the LEP and what happens next

John Chesworth, chair of the Preston Partnership and executive chairman of Harrison Drury

The LEP was successful in securing significant allocations of local growth and other government funding programmes. It helped local authorities understand the need for a pipeline of projects to be built up so that funding could be accessed in quite short turn around periods.

In the early days, and as directed by government, the LEPs played an important role in preparing pan-Lancashire strategies and frameworks.

Its biggest achievements included securing enterprise zone status for multiple sites. It was also the lead entity for the Preston, South Ribble and Lancashire City Deals - the LEP played a really important role in getting the City Deal negotiated and agreed with government.

And it filled the void in Lancashire - as much as it could - arising from no combined or devolved arrangements. It should and could have been more transparent - it seemed opaque at times and perhaps could have had a more independent structure.

Lancashire needs to focus on its devolution agenda and the LEP, if active, would probably be a distraction so it's probably good that there is one less piece of the jigsaw to fit in.



Robert Binns

Robert Binns, entrepreneur and chair of Downtown in Business Lancashire

The LEP has been an interesting initiative, with totally the right objectives. However, as per a lot of initiatives, one size does not fit all.

I feel the greatest achievement from the LEP era has to be the Preston Western Distributor scheme: a massive infrastructure project which will remove congestion and unlock land for both residential and commercial schemes.

With the current two-tier structure of governance in the county, and all the challenges that brings, perhaps adding another participant to the party was always going to be a big undertaking.

With resources squeezed, and living in an on-demand society when everything needs to have happened yesterday, duplication of roles and responsibilities coupled with prolonged deliberation on decision-making was never going to be a long-term solution.

Looking ahead, as The LEP enters its next phase, it is imperative that the voices of

businesses, both large and small, have a seat at the table, all working towards a shared objective.

Those individuals or organisations entrusted with championing business interests should not only advocate for their individual cases but also look at the big picture for the economic growth for the entire county.



Miranda Barker

Miranda Barker, chief executive East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce and member of the LEP board

The physical funding put into driving investment, such as the Growing Places Fund, was a huge facilitator.

You can see tangible evidence of the LEP's work. It helped make the AMRC North West happen here and following on from that positioned Lancashire in a way that it was able to attract the National Cyber Force headquarters to the county.

The LEP was a great identifier of opportunity - promoting and supporting our private sector bids into national government funding pots, so we could secure tens of millions of pounds of extra investment for Lancashire.

We were on the front-foot, and it was really driven by the LEP because it brought together the public and private sector and gave us a lot of profile.

The LEP also helped to frame the Lancashire narrative, breaking it down into key sectors and painting that picture of what is so brilliant about Lancashire in those areas. That work around where we lead, not just in the UK but globally, has enabled a lot of funding to come into Lancashire from both the government and the private sector.

Looking ahead, if Lancashire is to have a business board like Manchester and Liverpool, the key will be making sure the same passion is there to have that profile and buy in from the private sector.

The onus is on all of us to make this work if we want Lancashire to get investment from the public and private sectors and from overseas.

Steve Fogg, former LEP chair

It was a sad inevitability. The important element was independent business support and whilst the independence wasn't welcomed by some it was a key element of a voice for our county.

That said there are many local business networks in Lancashire that are working well and need all our support.

Steven Broomhead, former chief executive of the North West Regional Development Agency, member of Lancashire's first LEP board and chief executive of Warrington Council

Right from the start LEPs did not have any statutory powers and were given limited resources. The regional development agency had a lot more scope and powers.

The LEPs were able to speak as the voice of business, interacting with the public sector, and some have been good at that.

Lancashire as a place doesn't speak with one voice and that tribal nature makes things somewhat difficult. Right at the beginning there were calls for three separate LEPs in the county rather than a single partnership.

Going forward, I'd like to see one organisation in Lancashire with one business voice interacting with the private sector and with local government. That really has to be the ambition.



Mo Isap

Mo Isap, chief executive In4 Group and former Greater Manchester LEP co-chair

The LEPs have done a lot of good work when it comes to business engagement, regional inward investment and economic policy making.

In Lancashire you can see its work in terms of creating a strategy and vision and presenting that to national government and in making sure the area was attractive for investment.

LEPs have struggled in some areas where the political leadership wasn't more coordinated, where there was fragmentation.

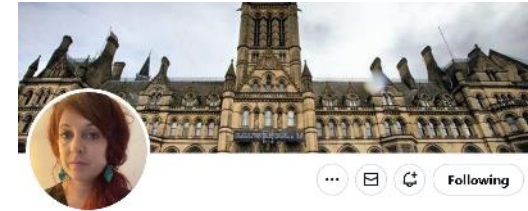
We have seen the LEP in Greater Manchester very quickly evolving into the Business Leaders group. It has been seamless.

Whatever replaces the LEP in Lancashire it has to involve political and business leaders working together for the long-term good. You have to go beyond the political cycle.

We have seen that happen in Greater Manchester, where the leadership is very much in sync, and we have seen what has come out of that in terms of attracting inward investment.

August – Jennifer Williams fact finding tour

- LEP comms negotiated/facilitated a fact-finding visit to Lancashire by Jennifer Williams (Financial Times northern correspondent)
- Tour included site visit to AMRC North West, UCLan, and County Hall
- Working with LCC comms, the LEP helped to create a full-day itinerary including meet and greet with several LEP representatives
- Meetings were also held with senior representatives from NCF, NWAA, LCC, and UCLan
- After the success of the visit, a second JW trip to Morecambe/Lancaster (Re: activity and opportunities around Eden North, Fraser House, Lancaster Uni etc.) is being explored
- NB JW's visit was not story-specific . It was a background and familiarisation trip to better understand current and emerging themes such as NCF relocation/NW Cyber Corridor and devolution, and get to know key influencers
- To that end, Miranda Barker was quoted in a Jen Williams FT piece in November about northern devolution deals



Jennifer Williams

@JenWilliams_FT

Northern correspondent, Financial Times. Ex Manchester Evening News. 'Cynical' Boris Johnson. @CapeJack follow at @OfficialUsM.jennifer.g.williams@ft.com

Manchester Joined September 2009

2,293 Following 78.3K Followers



**FINANCIAL
TIMES**

Itinerary for Jennifer Williams Lancashire Visit Tuesday 22 nd August			
Timing	Venue	Theme	Meeting
10:00 – 10:15	AMRC Northwest Samlesbury	Walk and talk tour	Melissa Conlon - Commercial Director AMRC North West
10:15 – 11:15		AEM, Low Carbon and Aero	Annette Weekes MBE – Paradigm Precision Paula Gill – CEO NW Aerospace Alliance David Bailey – CEO Aerospace Consulting Miranda Barker – CEO East Lancs Chamber
11:15 – 12:15		Samlesbury / Cyber	Alastair O. – National Cyber Force Andy Walker - LEP
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch – Millstone		
13:30 – 14:00	Travel to Preston		
14:00 – 14:45	UCLAN / Preston	Innovation / Preston Development	Stjohn Crean – PVC Research and Enterprise UCLAN Robb Binns – Preston Partnership Beckie Joyce – Radics Consulting
15:00 – 16:00	County Hall, Preston	Local Authority Support and Devolution	Phillippa Williamson – Leader LCC Aidy Riggott – Cabinet Member ED and Growth Simon Lawrence – Director Growth and Regen.

August – LEP/LCC Funding Hub

- The new LEP-backed Lancashire Funding Hub was launched in August
- Hosted by Boost, the initiative was developed by the LEP and LCC, and supported by Rosebud Business Finance
- Local media and partner coverage (led by Boost's PR team) carried an extensive quote from Debbie Francis about the significance of the hub
- There is a Funding Hub phase two upgrade/expansion of offer scheduled in the new year

NEWS / LANCASHIRE FUNDING HUB LAUNCHED TO BETTER CONNECT BUSINESSES WITH FUNDING PROVIDERS

Lancashire companies seeking funding to fast-track their growth are being advised to visit a new funding hub which has been launched by Lancashire County Council and the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Phase one of the new Lancashire Funding Hub is now live, providing Lancashire business leaders, finance directors, chief finance officers and board members with information about a variety of funding options.

It also includes insight from funding experts as well as business owners and managers who have been on their own funding journey.

The hub is designed to provide a single-entry point so people running businesses in Lancashire can better understand their options for external finance. It is in response to a report commissioned by the LEP and conducted by economic and social research consultancy FIOS about Lancashire companies' use of external finance.

Lancashire Funding Hub can be found on the Boost, Lancashire's Business Growth Hub website and includes both debt and equity finance such as Lancashire Enterprise Partnership's Growing Places Fund, Innovate UK funding, the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund and Rosebud Finance.

The hub will also feature inspirational content including Q&As from well-known funding providers in Lancashire and companies from across the county that have grown successfully using external finance.

County Councillor Aidy Riggott, cabinet member for economic development and growth, Lancashire County Council, said: "Ambitious Lancashire businesses have access to a huge range of debt and equity finance as well as high-quality finance support to help them understand the business finance landscape.



Lancashire Funding Hub



CC Aidy Riggott

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Debbie Francis, chair, Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, said: "By better connecting Lancashire's funding community with businesses, we will not only inspire more homegrown companies to use external funding to grow, we will also enhance Lancashire's economic offer to wider audiences. For example, the Funding Hub will help Lancashire create a stronger proposition for foreign-owned companies who want to base themselves here and expand. In addition, it will allow us to promote LEP initiatives such as the £20m Growing Places Fund and encourage start-ups and scale-ups from a variety of sectors to explore the wide range of funding pathways which are available through our partners."

HUB LAUNCHES TO HELP GROWING BUSINESSES ACCESS FUNDING



Lancashire County Council and the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership have launched a new funding hub to help growing businesses access the variety of finance options available to them.

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It has been created in response to a report commissioned by the LEP and conducted by economic and social research consultancy EKOS about Lancashire companies' use of external finance.

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County councillor Aidy Riggott, cabinet member for economic development and growth, Lancashire County Council, said: "Ambitious Lancashire businesses have access to a huge range of debt and equity finance as well as high-quality funded support to help them understand the business finance landscape.

"However, many Lancashire companies are not accessing this support. The work of the LEP and EKOS had identified a need for an informational portal to better connect Lancashire businesses with the available options and Lancashire Funding Hub is a direct response to this recommendation.

"It will improve our county's overall finance ecosystem, presenting more companies with the opportunity and ambition to grow at pace in Lancashire using external finance support."

Debbie Francis, chair, Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, added: "By better connecting Lancashire's funding community with businesses, we will not only inspire more homegrown companies to use external funding to grow, we will also enhance Lancashire's economic offer to wider audiences. For example, the Funding Hub will help Lancashire create a stronger proposition for foreign owned companies who want to base themselves here and expand.

"In addition, it will allow us to promote LEP initiatives such as the £20m Growing Places Fund and encourage startups and scaleups from a variety of sectors to explore the wide range of funding pathways which are available through our partners."

Lancashire Funding Hub can be found on the Boost; Lancashire's Business Growth Hub website and includes both debt and equity finance such as Lancashire Enterprise Partnership's Growing Places Fund, Innovate UK funding, the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund and Rosebud Finance.

BAROMETER

UP



▲ The government's Youth Investment Fund, part of the government's National Youth Guarantee, is sending £15m to Lancashire-based projects. The funding, from the £300m pot, includes £4.6m to be shared between Darwen Youth Centre and Audley and Queens Park Youth Hub, £3m for Blackburn Youth Zone and £2.3m for The Foxton Centre in Preston. There is also £1.7m for Blackpool Boys and Girls Club, £1m for Fleetwood Trust, £973,000 for Burnley Boys and Girls Club, £620,000 for Newground Together in Blackburn and £488,000 for The Boothouse Youth in Blackpool. Meanwhile, national charity OnSide has received planning permission to open a new youth zone in Preston.

▲ The Ministry of Defence has awarded BAE Systems an £870m contract to deliver a new radar for the Royal Air Force's Typhoon fighter jet fleet. The news followed the publication of BAE Systems' half-year results, which saw double-digit growth in sales and operating profit, up to £12bn and £1.2bn respectively, to the end of June. The engineering giant also made a £100,000 donation to enable the launch of an Eco-Lab at the Blackburn and Darwen Youth Zone.

▲ Lancashire County Council and the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) have launched the Lancashire Funding Hub, which has been designed to provide a single-entry point for businesses to better understand their options for external finance.

▲ Blackburn College's 135-year-old Victoria Building is set to undergo a multi-million-pound restoration which will convert the Grade II-listed, four-storey facility into a community and learning hub that sits at the heart of Blackburn's Town Centre Master Plan.

▲ The Tawd paper mill in Skelmersdale has secured £2.2m government funding to help it become the first production facility of its kind in the country to adopt hydrogen power. The mill is owned and operated by Swedish firm Essity and the funding, from the Industrial Fuel Switching Competition, will help it to trial hydrogen as an alternative to natural gas in its manufacturing process.



▲ The UK government and US-headquartered Kindeva Drug Delivery have teamed up to invest £33m to keep the production of green, low-carbon, respiratory inhalers in the UK. The investment will create 40 full-time jobs and safeguard 218 existing full-time jobs across

Lancashire Funding Hub launched to better connect businesses with funding providers



Lancashire companies seeking funding to fast-track their growth are being advised to visit a new funding hub which has been launched by Lancashire County Council and the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

Phase one of the new Lancashire Funding Hub is now live, providing Lancashire business leaders, finance directors, chief finance officers and board members with information about a variety of funding options.

It also includes insight from funding experts as well as business owners and managers who have been on their own funding journey.

The hub is designed to provide a single-entry point so people running businesses in Lancashire can better understand their options for external finance. It is in response to a report commissioned by the LEP and conducted by economic and social research consultancy EKOS about Lancashire companies' use of external finance.

Lancashire Funding Hub can be found on the Boost; Lancashire's Business Growth Hub website and includes both debt and equity finance such as Lancashire Enterprise Partnership's Growing Places Fund, Innovate UK funding, the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund and Rosebud Finance.

The hub will also feature inspirational content including Q&As from well-known funding providers in Lancashire and companies from across the county that have grown successfully using external finance.

County Councillor Aidy Riggott, cabinet member for economic development and growth, Lancashire County Council, said: "Ambitious Lancashire businesses have access to a huge range of debt and equity finance as well as high-quality funded support to help them understand the business finance landscape.

"However, many Lancashire companies are not accessing this support. The work of the LEP and EKOS had identified a need for an informational portal to better connect Lancashire businesses with the available options and Lancashire Funding Hub is a direct response to this recommendation.

"It will improve our county's overall finance ecosystem, presenting more companies with the opportunity and ambition to grow at pace in Lancashire using external finance support."

Debbie Francis, chair of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, said: "By better connecting Lancashire's funding community with businesses, we will not only inspire more homegrown companies to use external funding to grow, we will also enhance Lancashire's economic offer to wider audiences. For example, the Funding Hub will help Lancashire create a stronger proposition for foreign owned companies who want to base themselves here and expand.



Debbie Francis, chair of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership

"In addition, it will allow us to promote LEP initiatives such as the £20m Growing Places Fund and encourage startups and scaleups from a variety of sectors to explore the wide range of funding pathways which are available through our partners."

New Lancashire Funding Hub launched to better link ambitious business leaders with funding providers



Lancashire companies seeking funding to fast-track their growth are being advised to visit a new funding hub which has been launched by Lancashire County Council and the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

Phase one of the new [Lancashire Funding Hub](#) is now live, providing Lancashire business leaders, finance directors, chief finance officers and board members with information about a variety of funding options.

It also includes insight from funding experts as well as business owners and managers who have been on their own funding journey.

The hub is designed to provide a single-entry point so people running businesses in Lancashire can better understand their options for external finance. It is in response to a report commissioned by [the LEP](#) and conducted by economic and social research consultancy EKOS about Lancashire companies' use of external finance.

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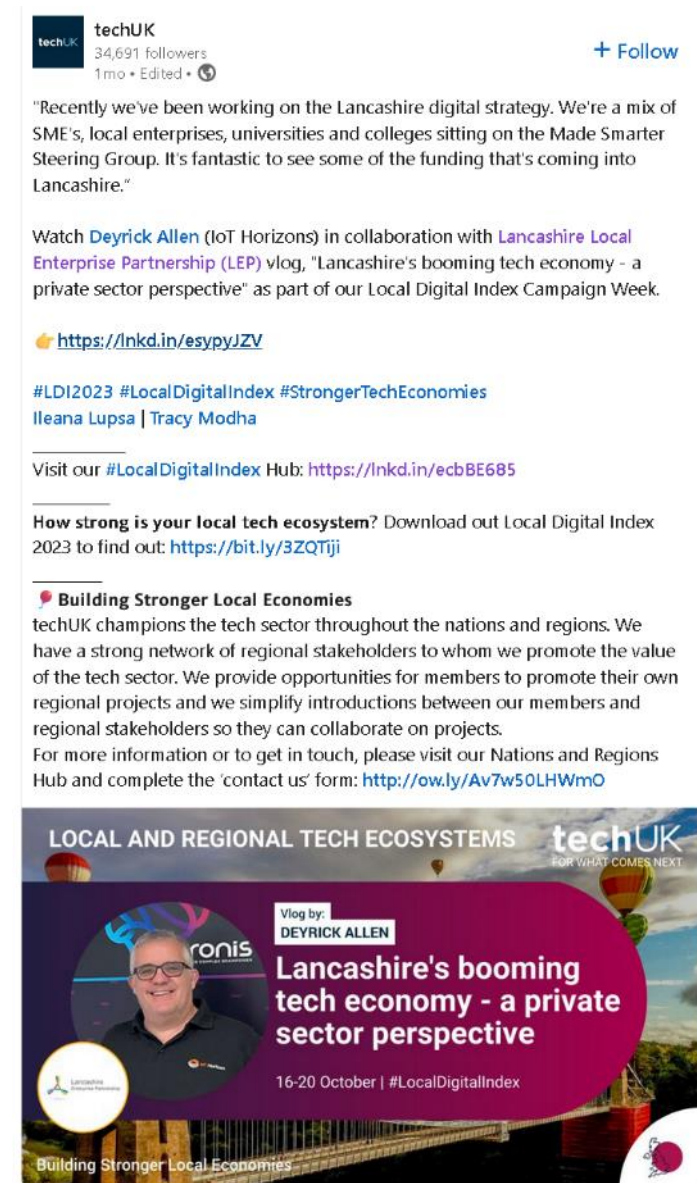
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October – TechUK Local Digital Index campaign

- Running alongside Birmingham Tech Week in October, TechUK wanted to use the publication of their latest tech report to showcase examples of good practice around the UK
- The LEP secured two opportunities to promote Lancashire tech and digital messaging through as part of TechUK’s campaign:
 - A guest vlog from Deyrick Allen from IoT Horizons extolling the strengths of Lancashire’s digital and tech ecosystem from an SME perspective
 - A second film, presented by Kerry Harrison (Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership) and Dan Knowles (Lancashire Digital Hub), promoting Lancashire’s skills, education and business support for tech-focused individuals ‘from classroom to boardroom’ + Lancashire’s commitment to inclusive growth



The image shows a LinkedIn post from TechUK. The post header includes the TechUK logo, name, 34,691 followers, and a '+ Follow' button. The main text of the post reads: "Recently we've been working on the Lancashire digital strategy. We're a mix of SME's, local enterprises, universities and colleges sitting on the Made Smarter Steering Group. It's fantastic to see some of the funding that's coming into Lancashire." Below this is a video player for a vlog by Deyrick Allen, with a link to the video: <https://lnkd.in/esypyJZV>. The post also includes hashtags #LDI2023, #LocalDigitalIndex, and #StrongerTechEconomies, and mentions Ileana Lupsa and Tracy Modha. There are two more links: one for the Local Digital Index Hub (<https://lnkd.in/ecbBE685>) and another for downloading the Local Digital Index 2023 report (<https://bit.ly/3ZQTjji>). The post is categorized under 'Building Stronger Local Economies' and includes a paragraph about TechUK's mission to support regional tech ecosystems. At the bottom, there is a promotional banner for the 'LOCAL AND REGIONAL TECH ECOSYSTEMS' report, featuring a photo of Deyrick Allen and the title 'Lancashire's booming tech economy - a private sector perspective'. The banner also includes the dates '16-20 October | #LocalDigitalIndex' and the TechUK logo.



Lancashire's booming tech economy - a private sector perspective

Guest vlog by Deyrick Allen, MD of IoT Horizons, and member of Lancashire LEP's Digital Sector Group #LocalDigitalIndex

In this vlog, Deyrick talks about the work he has been involved in as part of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership.



techUK @techUK

Kerry Harrison and Dan Knowles (@LancsSkillsHub), shared their insights on from classroom to boardroom: Lancashire's collaborative approach to driving tech growth as part of our Local Digital Index Campaign Week. ⭐

Visit our #LocalDigitalIndex Hub: techuk.org/resource/techu...

techUK @techUK

Watch Deyrick Allen (IoT Horizons) blog/Vlog, "Lancashire's booming tech economy - a private sector perspective" as part of our Local Digital Index Campaign Week.

techuk.org/resource/lanca...

Visit our #LocalDigitalIndex Hub: techuk.org/resource/techu...

techUK's Local Digital Index Campaign Week #LocalDigitalIndex

Kerry Harrison, Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership and Dan Knowles, Lancashire Digital Hub at Lancashire Digital Hub and The Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub, shared their insights on from classroom to boardroom: Lancashire's collaborative approach to driving tech growth as part of our Local Digital Index Campaign Week



September – November

Lancashire Cyber Festival and Cyber Partnership Launch

- In September, it was agreed by Andy Walker that any LEP PR/comms capacity be put towards supporting the Lancashire Cyber Festival (LCF) and launch of the Lancashire Cyber Partnership (LCP), in early November.
- It was further agreed that the LEP's retained PR consultancy (Bond Consulting) would take on the role of PR coordinator, and media relations lead, for both projects
- In addition, Bond Consulting was tasked with developing a 'long form' inward investment, skills and HEI narrative for Lancashire (and the wider North West Cyber Corridor) which all LCF/LCP partners could refer to, and draw upon, as required
- The LEP was also responsible for the development of a visual identity for the Lancashire Cyber Partnership in time for the festival (which was also delivered via Bond Consulting)



Lancashire Cyber Festival and Cyber Partnership Launch

- On behalf of the Lancashire Cyber Partnership (LCP) and Lancashire Cyber Festival (LCF), Bond Consulting delivered all elements of the PR and comms brief to an incredibly high standard:
- A new, 2,000 word overarching cyber narrative - and LCP launch press release - were both approved with very few changes from LCP members
- The creation and selection process for the LCP's new visual identity was transparent, democratic, and very well-managed
- Bond Consulting's media strategy - and its execution - generated sustained, positive coverage across all local and regional target media
- This included a three-minute package on BBC North West Today and North West Tonight, a full front-cover 'takeover' of the Lancashire Post and two-page in-depth feature, plus extensive coverage across all target local/regional news and business publications
- The LEP, as a founding member of the LCP, were referenced and quoted in all comms and PR material
- Andy Walker, representing the LEP and LCC, was one of the central media spokespeople for the festival, the cyber partnership, and Lancashire's overarching cyber economic opportunity

Please refer to the separate LCP/LCF coverage report, and the Lancashire Cyber Narrative, included as part of this report

About The Lancashire Cyber Partnership

The Lancashire Cyber Partnership (LCP) is a powerful and ambitious strategic collaboration between Lancashire County Council (LCC), the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP), the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), Lancaster University, BAE Systems, and the National Cyber Force (NCF).

It brings together expertise, resources, and key influencers, from across both the private and public sectors to ensure Lancashire maximises the opportunities set to be offered by cyber as a fast-growing global industry, and multi-faceted, domain.

The LCP's mission for Lancashire – and the wider North West Cyber Corridor it anchors – is to become one of the world's leading destinations for cyber businesses, support agencies, careers, training and research.

By the LCP's mission is to not only help create high-quality jobs, drive innovation, and facilitate new collaborations between industry and academia to enable smart, R&D across the County's cyber supply chain – it will also ensure the County benefits fully from all the positive social, cultural, and educational impacts that a vibrant, thriving cyber economy will have across the whole of Lancashire.

In addition, Lancashire will play a vital role in helping to address the nation's growing technology, digital and defence sectors, enabling the LCP to become one of the most successful attractors of digital economies in ways to live, do business, and invest in, as outlined in the Government's National Cyber Strategy. The National Cyber Strategy also sets out how the UK will continue to be a leading, responsible, and generative cyber power, able to protect and promote its interests in and through cyberspace, ensuring the safety, security and prosperity of the nation and its citizens.

The work of the Lancashire Cyber Partnership is so fully aligned to the principles set out underpinning the County's wider economic prosperity strategy, research and innovation plan, and the ambition of the Lancashire 2030 vision.



"Once in a generation" Lancashire cyber partnership



Lancashire has formed a new partnership to shape, support and promote the county's cyber eco-system.

Officially launched at the county's first ever Lancashire Cyber Festival, the aim is to develop Lancashire as a world-leading destination for cyber businesses, investors, careers, training, academia and innovation.



Strategic Command @UKStratCom - 2h
The National Cyber Force are proud to be part of the Lancashire Cyber Partnership, a new initiative launched this week at the first ever Lancashire Cyber Festival



Ongoing Partner PR & Comms

- The LEP continues to provide supportive quotes and press release content to support partner PR
- This includes partner announcements and milestones linked to LEP funding streams, such as the Growth Deal and Getting Building Fund
- We also continue to support positive Lancashire investment stories from partners such as the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund
- In every case, we ensure key messages linked to local economic growth, new jobs, and wider Lancashire prosperity, is embedded in every quote we supply
- NB the LEP has no control regarding how these pieces are presented to local media by partners, or what coverage is secured
- In addition, the LEP continues to proactively amplify and enhance partner news through its LinkedIn feed

Blackpool Abingdon Street Market to open new shops with 12 hints as to what you can expect

The opening of the retail offer at the new-look Abingdon Street Market is part of a much wider plan to regenerate Blackpool town centre, with aims to boost the economy, create jobs and provide more things to see and do



Blackpool's new trendy street food hall is a step closer to opening its new shopping locations. It comes after Abingdon Street Market took over the former traditional indoor market hall site.

Customers will be able to enjoy everything it has to offer from November 10 onwards. The opening of the retail side to the new-look Abingdon Street Market is part of wider [Blackpool](#) town centre regeneration plans, with aims to boost the economy, create jobs and provide more things to see and do.

With six independent eateries, two bars and an on-site coffee shop, teamed with a host of [entertainment](#) and events taking place, the council says the food and drink offer has exceeded expectation in terms of footfall and business projections. Local operating company, The Little Blackpool Leisure Company, is rolling out the market area phase and has undertaken the process to recruit retailers into the new market.

[Lancashire](#) Enterprise Partnership Chair, Debbie Francis OBE, said: "Abingdon Street Market's transformation, and the recent redevelopment and extension of Houndshell Shopping Centre, have both been supported by the LEP's Getting Building Fund. It's therefore great to see such investments helping to rejuvenate Blackpool's town centre, creating new jobs, and adding substantial value to the resort's wider retail and leisure offer, in the process."

New £207m motorway junction and link road to open in Preston

Monday 3 July 2023



A major new £207m road scheme linking parts of Preston and the Fylde Coast to the M55 motorway, will open to the public at 11am today (Monday 3 July).

Edith Rigby Way, the longest and most significant road in the Preston Western Distributor project, links the A583 Blackpool Road and Riversway with the new junction - the 'missing' junction 2 - on the M55.

The new road is named after Edith Rigby in honour of Preston's most famous suffragette, who dedicated most of her life to fighting for women's rights, particularly those of working-class women.

Work on the scheme, which includes two smaller roads, began towards the end of 2019 and took place through the Coronavirus pandemic. These three new roads connect key parts of the city, aim to reduce congestion on the existing road network, help people to get around, and unlock new economic opportunities for Preston and Lancashire as a whole.

The scheme includes two smaller link roads: William Young Way and Avice Pimblett Way, which connect to new and existing housing areas of North West Preston and Cottam.

These two roads are named after Victoria Cross recipient William Young, and Avice Pimblett OBE, who was the first woman town councillor, first woman alderman and first woman mayor of Preston.

The new roads provide direct access to new housing in the area and will support further developments in the future.

As well as promoting walking and cycling, the new roads will improve access to the motorway and will also support delivery of a proposed railway station at Cottam.

The new roads have been constructed by Costain, on behalf of Lancashire County Council, as part of the Preston, South Ribble and Lancashire City Deal.

Funding for the new road comes from the Department for Transport and the Lancashire Growth Deal, managed by the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, with further funding coming from Lancashire County Council, National Highways and City Deal.

Debbie Francis OBE, Chair of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, said:

“It's fantastic that the Preston Western Distributor has been officially opened. The scheme has been designed to not only improve our access to the national motorway network, but also open up new housing sites, new industrial sites, and unlock other new commercial opportunities.

“The £58m of Growth Deal funding which helped ensure its completion is also a clear example of how LEP investment can be used strategically to support transformational projects which benefit the whole of the county.”

Lancashire timber agent moves to new premises in Preston



Preston-based Pacific European Timber Agency Ltd (PETAL) has relocated to new premises and created two new jobs thanks to investment from NPIF – FW Capital Debt Finance.

PETAL has moved to new offices on Ribbleton Lane in Preston, following a period of strong growth and has created two new roles in office administration and finance. It was formed in 1986 as a global timber trading business sourcing hardwoods from Far East countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia which are then sold to UK Timber merchants and Importers. PETAL is also a leading trader in North & South American, Canadian, European, and African hardwoods and softwoods.

Steve Molyneux, FW Capital Investment Executive added: “We were impressed with Ian's extensive experience having worked in the timber trade for over 25 years. He has used this to forge an excellent reputation for PETAL. This is a great example of how our funding can drive growth with the relocation to new premises and creating new jobs.”

Debbie Francis OBE, Chair of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, said: “Earlier this year the LEP launched its new internationalisation strategy, a plan which highlights how we as a county have the potential to boost economic growth through increased international commerce. PETAL is a great example of such activity, and demonstrates how a Lancashire-based firm can build a thriving business by trading globally. It's therefore great that NPIF's support is helping them to expand, and create new jobs.”

Keira Shepperson, Director at British Business Bank, said: “PETAL's relocation to its new premises and job creation exemplifies the ambition embedded in Lancashire's business landscape. The company's expansion not only bolsters the timber industry of the UK but also reinforces Lancashire's position as a hub for innovation and economic development.”

Reel Cinema “premieres” its new multi-screen complex



The red carpet was rolled out to herald the “premiere” of Reel Cinema's new multi-screen complex in Burnley.

The seven-screen cinema forms part of the £23 million Pioneer Place development in the town centre.

More than 160 guests, including many of those who worked to make Pioneer Place a reality, gathered to enjoy a Bollywood movie, and a film *The Miracle Club* which goes on general release next month. Food and refreshments were provided by Burnley Leisure.

Reel Cinemas director Sunil Suri said: “As Reel Cinemas opens its doors in Burnley's Pioneer Place, we're thrilled to offer a space where the people of Burnley can gather, whether to watch a film or simply to spend quality time together.

“We're proud to be the “Reel Heart of the Community” offering memorable experiences that don't break the bank nor compromise on quality.

“We'd like to extend our gratitude to all the organisations who worked together to transform this vision of developing a leisure complex in the heart of Burnley into reality.”

Pioneer Place is expected to create around 100 new jobs. Construction was carried out by the council's development partner Maple Grove Developments, part of the Eric Wright Group, with funding from Burnley borough and Lancashire county councils, the Government's Getting Building Fund administered by Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP), and fashion company and the borough's largest employer, boohoo.

Debbie Francis OBE, Chair of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, said: “It's fantastic to see how the LEP's Growing Places Fund continues to support schemes like Pioneer Place. The opening of the Reel Cinema will not only create new jobs locally, it will also help generate footfall which many other businesses will benefit from, adding significant value to Burnley's wider retail, leisure and hospitality offer in the process.”

County Councillor Aidy Riggott, Lancashire County Council's cabinet member for economic development and growth, said: “Pioneer Place is an important project for Lancashire and a brilliant example of the power of strong partnership working.

“The opening of Reel Cinema is a significant milestone for Pioneer Place, which will bring significant regeneration to this part of Burnley town centre. The cinema is looking fantastic and I would encourage people from Burnley and farther afield to come and see for yourself.”

£17.5m of funding from NPIF – FW Capital drives growth for Lancashire businesses



FW Capital has provided £17.5 million of investment funding to back Lancashire businesses, alongside an additional figure of £45 million co-investment attracted from private sector investors.

The £17.5 million funds have been invested directly from **NPIF – FW Capital Debt Finance**, which is managed by FW Capital and is part of the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund. It supports ambitious, high-growth businesses with finance for growth and new job creation.

To date, over 50 companies in Lancashire have received investment backing. Wholesale and retail trade are the most active sectors to date, receiving around a third of the funding, followed by manufacturing and construction.

Junior Bent, Portfolio Executive at FW Capital, said: "Through improved access to finance, investee businesses across Lancashire have been able to realise their growth plans, create jobs and achieve their full potential. This has all played a significant role in the success of the north west economy and we're delighted to work with NPIF to deliver much needed finance to SMEs across the region and unlock barriers for growth."

One Lancashire business which has received investment from NPIF-FW Capital Finance is manufacturer and supplier of roadside towing equipment, Trailerteq. Based in Preston, Trailerteq supplies its products to independent roadside recovery businesses as well as the RAC and their dealer network. The business has received two six figure rounds of funding in 2022 and 2023 to support its continued growth.

Andy Eames, Managing Director at Trailerteq explains: "We're committed to continued investment in our technology and continually improving our offering. We've developed robust systems which enhance our already proven Rapid Deployment Transporter (RDT) which is the preferred recovery equipment for operators worldwide."

"The financial support from FW Capital has been an important part of our growth story and the team has shown continued confidence and support in our business. Junior Bent's support has been exemplary and the whole funding process has been straight forward. We've also recently taken on an apprentice and have expanded our team to include a diverse range of ages because we're always looking for people to do the job, no matter their age."

Debbie Francis OBE, Chair of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, said: "It's great that the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund and FW Capital are continuing to provide backing for businesses in both Lancashire and across of the north west, and the additional investment their support helps to leverage cannot be underestimated. This type of funding, especially within sectors such as retail, manufacturing, and construction, can really help Lancashire SMEs to grow their businesses, invest in new equipment and premises, and create new jobs, which in turn boosts the region's economy as a whole."

Debbie Sorby, Senior Manager at British Business Bank said: "It is great to see the increasing number of companies in Lancashire securing investment. Lancashire is a great example of how the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund supports businesses beyond the North's major cities."

"FW Capital's milestone in delivering £17.5m in NPIF funding in Lancashire, and attracting private co-investment is a formidable achievement - we're looking forward to seeing future growth as the region strengthens its core industries, and pave the way for further development and job creation."

Work starts on new Batch Gin bar at Northlight in Brierfield



Following the grant of planning permission in May, work will now start to transform the former substation at Northlight into a new facility for Batch Brew Ltd.

The works will form the next phase at Northlight and will be undertaken by local developer and contractor, Barnfield Construction.

Northlight is being brought to Pendle by PEARL – Pendle Enterprise and Regeneration (**Brierfield** Mill) Ltd, a joint venture company between Barnfield Investment Properties and Pendle Council.

Tracy Clavell-Bate on the project team of PEARL, said: "The SubStation Bar is a great addition to Northlight and undoubtedly will become a popular destination for our local community and tourists. It is great news that Batch Brew have chosen Northlight as their base and further evidence of Northlight's appeal as a place to work and live."

"Northlight embodies everything PEARL was set up to do. Once complete it will take centre stage in the economic fortunes of Lancashire and be a Northern Powerhouse once again, bringing jobs, quality homes and tourism to Pendle."

Northlight also received funding from the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Growth Deal and Lancashire County Council.

The former Brierfield Mill complex is over 350,000 sq ft across a seven-acre site alongside the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and is also home to a complex of 80 quality apartments, Group First head quarters, Store First Self Storage, Burnley FC in the Community's Leisure Box, Fundaland, In-Situ Garage for arts and cultural opportunities and Lancashire Adult Learning's HQ.

Debbie Francis OBE, chairman of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, said: "Taking a large disused mill like Brierfield and transforming it into a contemporary mixed-used scheme like Northlight is exactly the type of regenerative project the LEP's Growth Deal was designed to support."

"The fact a successful and expanding local business like Batch Brew is now opening a new facility there is also testament to how our investments continue to drive economic growth, and support new jobs, across all parts of Lancashire."

Founded in 2011, Batch Brew started life as a brewery, before its founder and director Phil Whitwell recognised the opportunity available in the craft gin market.

Abingdon Street Market Retail Opening



The highly anticipated opening of the retail offer at Abingdon Street Market is edging closer! The doors that open out onto Abingdon Street itself will once again be in full use, allowing customers to enjoy the array of market stalls which will be open for business from the 10 November onwards.

The opening of the retail offer at the new-look Abingdon Street Market is part of a much wider plan to regenerate Blackpool town centre, with aims to boost the economy, create jobs and provide more things to see and do.

The popular Food Hall element of the market has been open since May and has quickly become a key favourite with both residents and visitors of all ages.

With six independent eateries, two bars and an on-site coffee shop, teamed with a host of entertainment and event taking place, the food and drink offer has exceeded expectation in terms of footfall and business projections.

Local operating company, The Little Blackpool Leisure Company, is excited to roll out the market area phase and has undertaken the process to recruit retailers into the new market.

After attracting significant demand, the team have appointed an extensive range of retailers offering a variety of wares for everyone to enjoy - just in time for a spot of Christmas shopping!

Jake Whittington, Director of Little Blackpool Leisure Company Limited, said: "We're extremely excited for the opening of the retail market this November."

"We have a great mix of retailers that come from across Blackpool and bring something new to the town centre. "With low cost rent and high footfall, we hope this is a place where independent local retailers will flourish."

"We've also created a community space that can be used for a range of workshops, charity-led activities, talks and co-working events."

Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Chair, Debbie Francis OBE, said: "Abingdon Street Market's transformation, and the recent redevelopment and extension of Houndhill Shopping Centre, have both been supported by the LEP's Getting Building Fund."

"It's therefore great to see such investments helping to rejuvenate Blackpool's town centre, creating new jobs, and adding substantial value to the resort's wider retail and leisure offer, in the process."

If you are interested in learning more about what's happening at Abingdon Street Market, please visit the official website: www.abingdonstreetmarket.com or keep up to date with the latest news by following their dedicated Instagram and Facebook pages.

Abingdon Street Market has received £3.6 million from the UK Government through the Getting Building Fund, £315,000 through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and £90k through the Historic England Heritage Action Zone programme.

Proactive LinkedIn activity and partner amplification

Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
1,136 followers
1mo • Edited •

Was great to see such a broad mix of key partners and senior policymakers coming together this week to discuss what a new [#innovation](#) campus and [#technology](#) hub in [#Lancashire](#) could look like, and how it could support wider digital-led economic growth across the whole of the county.

Facilitated by [Plexal](#), participants included representatives from [Department for Science, Innovation and Technology](#), [BAE Systems](#) and [AMRC](#), alongside colleagues representing [Lancaster University](#), [University of Central Lancashire](#), [Lancashire County Council](#), [Fraser House Hub](#), [The Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub](#), [Preston Partnership](#) and [Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership \(LEP\)](#)'s Digital, Health and Advanced Manufacturing sector groups, and the LEP's Innovation Board. Also in the room were property consultants, branding experts, and inward investment specialists, who brought additional insights and expertise to the table.

As well as sharing individual perspectives, everyone present contributed to a wide-ranging debate about how and what is different about Lancashire's rapidly growing tech and innovation offer, how to better join up existing R&D assets and tech clusters, how to maximise incoming investments such as the [#NCF](#)'s HQ at Samlesbury, and how we ensure 'good' economic growth which benefits all of Lancashire's communities and stakeholders.

It was a really constructive and collaborative session - and on behalf of Lancashire, the LEP would like to thank everyone who took part for their time, invaluable contributions, and ongoing support. [Professor Melissa Conlon Anne-Marie Huck \(formerly Parkinson\)](#) [Kam Kothia OBE DL](#) [Annette Weekes MBE](#) [David Porter](#) [Colin McLaughlin](#) [Jennie Noble](#) [Beckie Joyce](#) [Dan Knowles](#) [Rory Southworth](#) [Richard Bond](#) [Holly Smith](#) [Russell Gundry](#) [Ben Edginton-Thomas](#) [Bradley Finn](#) [Andy Walker](#) [Maya Ellis](#) [Kerry Harrison](#)



Dan Knowles and 28 others

5 comments • 3 reposts

Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
1,136 followers
1w •

Another example of world-leading [#innovation](#) coming out of the county, and on [#LancashireDay](#) to boot. [Lancaster University](#)'s cutting edge environmental monitoring and predictive modelling capabilities have previously been cited as having huge potential in the [#spacedata](#) sector, but to see that same expertise set to help mitigate the impact of the climate crisis in our oceans is yet another fantastic R&D achievement. [#technology](#) [#researchanddevelopment](#) [#climatechange](#) [#oceanography](#) [#ai](#) [#predictiveanalytics](#) [Matt Wright](#) [Alan Cross](#) [Maya Ellis](#) [Jane Dalton](#) [Fraser House Hub](#)



Jessica Wenmouth • 1st
Commercialisation Impact Manager at Lancaster University
1w •

[Lancaster University](#) has secured £300,000 from [STFC](#) to commercialise a breakthrough AI-driven iceberg and sea ice detection system! ...see more



£300,000 award to commercialise iceberg and sea ice detection using AI - Lancaster University

[lancaster.ac.uk](#) • 3 min read

Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
1,136 followers
1mo •

[#Blackpool](#) is synonymous with entertainment, but anyone who thinks [#Esports](#) is just people playing video games would be very much mistaken. Great to see the resort hosting this prestigious international event and even better that it's creating a platform where the Fylde coast's - and Lancashire's- wider digital, tech and innovation story can be shared. [Marketing Lancashire](#) [The Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub](#) [Lancashire Business View](#) [Winter Gardens Blackpool](#)



Blackpool Makes It Work
1,782 followers
1mo •

EuropaHalo Blackpool 2023 is taking place at the Winter Gardens on November 11th and 12th! It's gearing up to be the biggest European Halo event where teams are competing in more than ten years. ...see more



EuropaHalo 2023 is coming to Blackpool this November - Blackpool

[businessinblackpool.com](#) • 6 min read

Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
1,136 followers
1mo • 🌐

Another great tech investment event in #Lancaster co-produced by **Fraser House Hub Northern Reach** and **Praetura Ventures**, all part of the ongoing **FHundED** programme supported by **Lancashire County Council** and other local partners. **Lancashire Business View Prolific North Lancaster Guardian Boost; Lancashire's Business Growth Hub**

FHundED
536 followers
1mo • 🌐

Yesterday's Founder Feedback Session by **Praetura Ventures** and FHundED gave founders the opportunity to gather some excellent feedback from Investors and other experienced founders on their Pitch. [...see more](#)



Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
1,138 followers
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As part of its Internationalisation Strategy, and working with **East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce**, the LEP is supporting a delegation of **#Lancashire #SMEs** who are attending **COP28 UAE** in Dubai next week.

Companies, including **isentra IoT Horizon Ltd Green Shield Group Carbonbit LiNa Energy Qwala** and **Ryse Energy** will be taking part in a series of events which are focused specifically on low carbon and net zero opportunities.

Facilitated by the **British Chambers of Commerce**, the week long programme of meetings, workshops and receptions will include direct engagement with UAE representatives and other strategic partners. There will also be meetings with leading government figures from the UK, including Claire Coutinho, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero.

Other events will cover specific issues and challenges such as ESG, clean energy, developing 15 minute cities, sustainable construction, green finance, net zero transport, and more.

The Lancashire delegation will get to use these sessions to highlight low carbon innovations, technologies and solutions which have been developed in the county, and discuss Lancashire's wider commercial capabilities and sector strengths.

Lancashire businesses will also get to explore potential collaborations and knowledge exchange with other companies and partners, both in the UK and globally.

Commenting on the Lancashire delegation, CEO of East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, and the LEP's low carbon lead, **Miranda Barker OBE**, said: "The Lancashire delegation will get to showcase their low carbon leading tech to international businesses and public sector customers, while championing the cause for global climate change management, and the role innovative tech can have in managing the crisis."

In addition, Miranda has been invited to witness some of the high level COP28 negotiation sessions themselves, and will get the chance to hear first hand updates on key international agreements designed to help tackle the global climate crisis.

You can read more about the LEP-supported COP28 delegation, and Miranda's view on what she hopes will be achieved, in the new Lancashire Business View <https://lnkd.in/eiBeyAUy>
#cop28 #hydrogen #lowcarbon #cleanenergy #innovation #esg #transport #cont for Business and Trade British Centres and Chambers of Commerce Abroad Department for Science, Innovation and Technology Boost; Lancashire's Business Growth Hub Marketing Lancashire The LEP Network The NP11

Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
1,136 followers
2mo • 🌐

Great news for Lancashire's clinical healthcare sector, and our region's growing medtech and digital health clusters.

University of Central Lancashire
128,651 followers
2mo • Edited • 🌐

We're delighted that the Government has increased our medical student allocation from 15 to 50 to help the **#NHS** tackle a shortage of **#healthcare** professionals.

This is very exciting news for the University but is arguably even better news for the wider region as we have significant health challenges in the **#NorthWest** and a recognised shortage of doctors.

<https://ow.ly/GCmu50PSxG3>

#Doctors
#MedicalTraining
#HENews



Government grants 35 new medical places to University of Central Lancashire
uclan.ac.uk • 1 min read

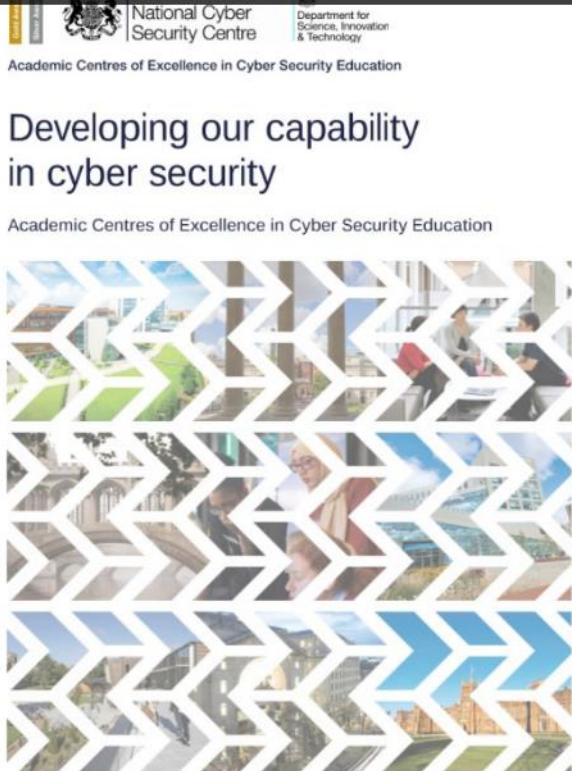
Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
1,138 followers
5d • 🌐

Fantastic to see [Lancaster University](#) featured in this new [National Cyber Security Centre](#) guide to the UK's leading universities for cyber and cyber security teaching and research. Lancaster is the only HEI in northern England to be featured, and is only one of 12 universities in the country to be awarded gold standard accreditation [Security Lancaster Institute Strategic Command Lancaster University Cyber Security](#)

 National Cyber Security Centre
426,933 followers
5d • 🌐

In 2020 the NCSC and the [Department for Science, Innovation and Technology](#) introduced a new programme to recognise Academic Centres of Excellence in Cyber Security Education (ACE-CSE). [...see more](#)

NCSC ACE-CSE • 21 pages



Updated in November 2023

Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
1,138 followers
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Collaborations beyond the county's borders is a key element of several LEP strategies and growth plans, so it's fantastic to see one of Lancashire's HEIs, [Edge Hill University](#), partnering with [Wigan Council](#) in Greater Manchester on this new initiative. [The Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub](#) also has a great track record of working with partners outside of Lancashire to support the wider north west's skills agenda, while universities such as [Lancaster University](#) and [University of Central Lancashire](#) continue to build links across the region to deliver major R&D and industry-focused programmes in sectors such as [#cyber](#) [#cleantech](#) [#enviroment](#) and [#engineering](#). [#Lancashire](#) [#skills](#) [#education](#) [#Wigan](#) [#GreaterManchester](#). [The NP11 The LEP Network](#) <https://lnkd.in/eQXx86gt>




Landmark agreement signed to boost skills and education in the Wigan borough - Edge Hill University

edgehill.ac.uk • 3 min read

Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
1,138 followers
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The LEP's low carbon and energy lead [Miranda Barker OBE](#) has made a powerful statement in response to the news that the government is considering revising its position on a number of [#netzero](#) and [#lowcarbon](#) targets. [The NP11](#) ...see more

 East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce
5,816 followers
2mo • 🌐

Reacting to news of the Prime Minister's possible weakening of UK EV targets in a 4.30pm speech today, East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce CEO, [Miranda Barker OBE](#), comments:

"It is hugely concerning to hear the news that the Government may be considering rowing back on the petrol & diesel new car sales phase out.

"EV and EV battery tech is a hugely significant tech sector for the Lancashire low carbon business community, with our expertise being a draw for future inward investments and firms potentially moving into Lancashire, and a strong supporting factor in the sector's overall UK growth.

"In addition by creating uncertainty in the market, this is stalling private sector investment into the market coming forward – holding back the sector development and causing the UK to fall even further behind.

"The low carbon tech market is now being referred to as Industry 5 - the next big industrial market opportunity, and the serious concern is that the UK is being left flat-footed on the starting line missing the chance to capitalise on this, whilst China and the US race ahead."

It is expected that the Prime Minister will reveal 'watered down' versions of existing green targets. The BBC reports that whilst he has expressed his commitment to achieving Net Zero by 2050, he intends to deliver it in a "more proportionate way".

Read more 📖

<https://lnkd.in/e3UqssJA>

[#netzero](#) [#EV](#) [#lowcarboneyconomy](#)



Rishi Sunak considers weakening key green policies

bbc.co.uk • 3 min read

Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
1,136 followers
1mo • 🌐

Fascinating session unpacking the many different dimensions to the **#Blackpool** silicon sands proposition. Sustainable tech/digital economic growth with additional multi-sector commercial benefits, plus positive social value impacts also wrapped in. **Blackpool Makes It Work Adam Ogden (MCIPR) Rob Green**

Innovate Lancashire
793 followers
1mo • 🌐

We are now welcoming **Tony Doyle** to the stage at **#LANIF23!** 🔍

It's great to find out more about Blackpool and the Fylde coast's, 'Silic' ...see more



Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
1,136 followers
1mo • 🌐

Another great example of Lancashire driving collaborative R&D opportunities across the north west, this time focused on **#cybersecurity** and **#technology #innovation** **Lancashire Cyber Alliance Lancashire County Council Innovate Lancashire Marketing Lancashire Lancashire Digital Hub** The NP11

Jessica Wenmouth • 1st
Commercialisation Impact Manager at Lancaster University
1mo • 🌐

It has been an extremely busy start to October for **Research Commercialisation at Lancaster University**, but I am delighted to share the news that **Lancaster University** will be leading one of **Research England** Connecting Capal ...see more



Lancaster University to lead major £1.2 million project to unlock cyber security potential across North West - Lancaster University
lancaster.ac.uk • 4 min read

Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
1,136 followers
1mo • 🌐

Great to see our energy and low carbon lead **Miranda Barker OBE** from **East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce** quoted in this piece from **Made Smarter UK** reflecting on Friday's **Innovate Lancashire** Innovation Festival hosted at **AMRC** North West. Also good to see it includes comments from the Chair of our Innovation Board, **Professor Graham Baldwin**, featured plus details of our five year Innovation Plan for the county.
<https://lnkd.in/e6cF7Rab>

Five fascinating insights from Lancashire Innovation Festival 2023 | Made Smarter
madesmarter.uk • 1 min read
Made Smarter joined hundreds of entrepreneurs, business leaders to share knowledge at the La...

Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
1,136 followers
2mo • Edited • 🌐

This was a very insightful event, and it's great that the **#cyber** opportunity for all of **#Lancashire** is starting to be communicated in such an upbeat, positive and collaborative manner. Also was good to see so many LEP partners in the room from across the **#skills #training #business** and **#investment** ecosystem **Blackburn College (UK) Lancaster University Nybble Group KPMG UK Northrop Grumman IN4 Group The Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub IBM Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council**

IN4 Group
4,486 followers
2mo • Edited • 🌐

🎉 We were delighted to come together with **Blackburn College (UK)** and **North West Cyber Security Cluster** today for the "Strengthening the Lancashire Cyber Security Supply Chain" event which brought representatives from bus ...see more



LEP PR and Comms – Looking Ahead

- As future local government arrangements are still being worked through, it is hard to anticipate what LEP type of comms activity or PR support will be required in the spring
- However - based on the assumption there will be a Lancashire business board function, and/or cluster groups post-March, Bond Consulting has is developing a skeleton comms and PR plan for 2024
- The plan will be primarily focused on potential sector-led opportunities across areas like health, digital/technology, and advanced manufacturing, in line with the proposed cluster board structure
- It will also reflect some of the convergence and sector specialisms as identified in the Lancashire Innovation Plan, and cross-cutting themes such as inward investment, skills, and R&D
- With so many unknowns, this plan should however be considered as indicative of the type of opportunities and activities Lancashire could/should be pursuing – from a ‘voice of business’ PR perspective – going forward
- We also anticipate that a LEP report/review for 2022-24 (which would also highlight the LEP’s achievements and positive legacy) will be published at some point in the new year.
- This document could/should also be used to give partners and stakeholders a clear sense of what is set to follow in the LEP’s place from April 2024

