

Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP

Secretary of State
Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

26 January 2022

Dear Secretary of State

Local Enterprise Partnerships: Delivering Growth Hubs across England

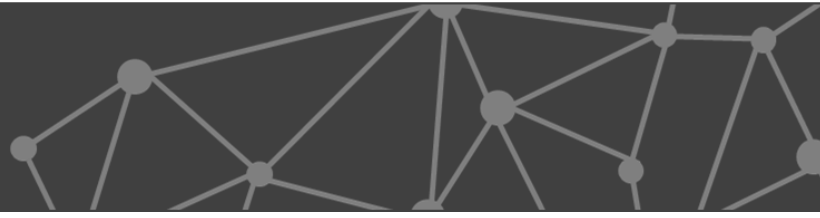
At our meeting on 15th December you kindly made a particular point of praising the importance and impact of LEP Growth Hubs. Indeed, the respect for the Growth Hub Network has been a consistent theme in my LEP colleagues' interactions with the majority of MPs across England and was echoed by business leaders in the 15 roadshows we ran for BEIS and MHCLG Ministers. Their contribution during the Covid crisis and as we transitioned from the EU has been recognised as significant.

We know you are having to make some difficult decisions on where you direct BEIS funding in the future and wanted to stress the critically important work being delivered by our Growth Hubs across England, which has seen more than 2.3 million businesses and individuals turn to them for advice and support during 2021/22 alone. As we emerge from restrictions, LEP Growth Hubs are continuing their vital role in supporting businesses seize new opportunities, helping them become more resilient as well as connecting them to government programmes such as Help to Grow and export and trade services, working closely with the Chambers of Commerce, FSB and other BROs.

The launch of the LEP Growth Hub network has provided government with an unrivalled local capability on the ground which is able to flex quickly and reach directly into local businesses and to provide trusted support signposting business to both local and national help. That support has been tailored to meet local needs and has shown the ability to flex at pace, whether that means dealing with local shocks such as flood recovery, responding to local company crises and collapse, as well as helping with scaling up, driving innovation and helping to deliver net zero ambitions. In addition, the network has demonstrated its capability to respond to urgent requests from Government including dealing with 15,000 EU Exit queries and providing guidance to 32,000 businesses who attended EU Transition events.

During 2020/21 the LEP Growth Hub network also designed and delivered the £30m Covid 19 'Kickstart' recovery scheme offering grant funding to businesses impacted by Covid measures and the Peer to Peer Network support programme which was in very high demand. In short, LEP Growth Hubs play a central role in the local business ecosystem bringing together the best of public, private, third sector and academic support, providing a single, neutral, and trusted 'go to' contact point for businesses of any size or any sector.

LEP Growth Hubs have a detailed understanding of place, translating national policy and programmes into local delivery and help bring national actors to the local stage. This has been critical in supporting programmes like Help to Grow and Made Smarter, and connecting local SMEs to the British Business Bank, Innovate UK, Catalysts etc. Using their unique understanding and data insights, LEP Growth Hubs also play a vital role in feeding back data, from skills and innovation to sustainability and productivity, in real time to central government, helping to shape and inform policy development and responses. This was particularly helpful in shaping revisions to the Furlough scheme and the various support grants. With their local contacts Growth Hubs worked very closely with Local Authorities to ensure that grants found their way to stricken businesses when they needed the money the most.



As you make difficult funding decisions, I hope we can rely on your continued support and funding to ensure LEP Growth Hubs are able to continue to support local business to adapt and capitalise on the post pandemic and post EU landscape. A copy of this letter goes to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Paul Scully MP, Minister for Small Business and Andy Haldane.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Bretton', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mark Bretton
Chair, LEP Network