

Questions and Answers from HotSW LEP CIC AGM Friday 22 October 2021 via webinar

1. What is the latest Govt policy towards LEPs? For example, will LEPs continue or not?
There has been no conclusion to the LEP review announced at the Budget in March. Originally intended to conclude by the summer, it is expected that Government's plans will be set out in the Levelling Up white paper, due for publication in the next few weeks. In the meantime the LEP has worked with the LEP Network, officials and MPs to continue to set out the opportunity presented by bringing private sector business leaders into local economic development.
2. Which Plan is the HotSW LEP currently working to? For example, is it the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), the Build Back Better Plan, or something else?
The LEP published its Build Back better plan earlier in 2021, which was also endorsed by the area's local authorities and National Parks. The plan sets out the key opportunities to deliver clean and inclusive growth across the area and along with the Blueprint for Clean Growth is now setting direction for the LEP's work. The plan is heavily based on the former Local Industrial Strategy; LIS are no longer recognised by Government which earlier in 2021 announced that the national industrial strategy would be replaced by the Plan for Growth
3. Have Levelling Up and Build Back Better significantly changed HotSW priorities and plans or the objectives you are set by the Government?
For several years now the LEP's central priorities have been raising productivity and is doing so to deliver clean and inclusive growth. In addition, delivery is continuing of the existing portfolio of Growth Deal and Getting Building Fund, Growth Hub and Careers Hub. Therefore Levelling Up and Build Back Better have not fundamentally changed this though the exact role the LEP will play in the future will depend on the LEP review.
4. How much of a risk is the potential shortfall of core funds?
The government has contributed £500,000 a year to core LEP funds since LEPs were established. In a change to previous policy, in 2021-2 this has been split into two lots of £250k, the first of which has been paid and confirmation of the second is still awaited. There has always been uncertainty about longer-term funding for LEP operations and in recent years the LEP has therefore built up a reserve to be able to provide more certainty to the team and stakeholders. As detailed at the AGM this means that as currently structured, without any further core funding from Government the LEP can operate for around 6 months of 2022-3. If the remaining £250k is paid, this enables the LEP to operate 'as is' for 8 months of 2022-3. Clearly, the longer-term position is dependent on the outcome of the LEP review.