

LOTS DONE

MORE TO DO...



ANDY STREET'S PLAN FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS
APRIL 2024

ANDY STREET: PUTTING THE WEST MIDLANDS FIRST

I never wanted to be a politician. In fact I didn't want to be a businessman either. I was determined to become a social worker, building on my experience of running holiday camps for disadvantaged children to give a helping hand to those less fortunate. But I was turned down.

What followed was 30 years of rising from shop floor to CEO at John Lewis. In my ten years at the helm I guided the business to become one of Britain's most successful - and trusted - brands, and introduced the now beloved annual Christmas advert.

I grew up in Northfield and Solihull seeing the West Midlands being ripped apart, and left with a heavy heart at 18 thinking there was no life for me here. But this place gets into your blood like no other, and I just couldn't stay away.

For years I continued to run the kids' holiday camps - taking children from the West Midlands to the Welsh coast - and came back whenever I could to see my parents and friends.

I was determined to see this place do better, and said to myself that one day I would come back permanently and help ensure more people got to share in the opportunities this region gave me.

When the Mayoral job came up. I knew I had to give up my business career to go for it, but perhaps more importantly I knew I had to do it differently. Politics in this country is full of pettiness and conflict with division and grandstanding winning out over doing what's best.

I was sure - at least for the West Midlands - I could change that. And you believed in me.

Since 2017 it has been the greatest honour of my life serving as your Mayor. Using my non-partisan, business-like approach, we have made huge strides.

With £10 billion of new investment we've opened new metro routes and train stations, built a record number of homes to become the UK leader in housebuilding, and created hundreds of thousands of quality jobs - alongside the introduction of a tenacious up-skilling programme - so people no longer have to move away for their career.

We've also faced the climate emergency head on, invested in our culture, and helped halve the number of rough sleepers on our streets.

This has been achieved through cross-party working, sound financial management with no Mayoral tax, and sticking to my number one promise - place before party.

But the job isn't done. I have plans to further upgrade our transport network, spend £400 million on building social homes, and turn the West Midlands into a tech capital of the UK.

It is more important than ever that the West Midlands has a leader who can be trusted to get it right - and at the right price. I hope you will see the progress we've made over the last seven years, and keep your faith in me to be that leader.



Andy Street

Conservative Candidate for West Midlands Mayor

SUMMARY: MY PLAN TO KEEP PUTTING THE WEST MIDLANDS FIRST

DELIVER THE 2040 TRANSPORT PLAN

- This year, open nine new metro stations, three new railway stations, build a new interchange in Dudley, and introduce new state-of-the-art trains on the Cross-City Line.
- Next year, implement a 'tap and go' fare capping system to make travel on bus, rail and tram cheaper and easier than ever before. Payments will be capped at a daily or weekly limit.
- Ramp up progress on our 2040 Transport Plan with £6 billion of £15 billion already secured. This will ensure the West Midlands has a public transport system to rival London.
- Keep our fares low and protect our network, as well as consider the case for bringing our buses back into public control.

BUILD THE HOMES WE NEED WHILST PROTECTING THE GREEN BELT

- Continue to achieve the best housebuilding figures in the UK against targets by building more than our target of 15,257 new homes every year, so even more local people can buy or rent their own home.
- Double down on our 'Brownfield First' approach, cleaning up derelict industrial sites to deliver the homes we need whilst protecting our green spaces.
- Use our £400 million war chest to start a social housing revolution to help those on low incomes, support the regeneration of council estates, ensure developers provide truly affordable housing, and extend our successful 'Housing First' scheme to prevent homelessness.
- Work with local councils to bolster their planning departments to ensure key developments get off the ground quickly.

CREATE JOBS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERYONE

- Create 425,000 new jobs and training opportunities over the next four years
- Build on the success of the fastest growing tech sector in the UK to make the West Midlands an international tech leader, with plans for a 'SXSW-style' tech, music and creative festival.
- Invest hundreds of millions a year into our "Plan for Growth" to turbocharge the West Midlands' economy to create high quality jobs in sectors of the future.
- Continue record levels of foreign investment, so more major global companies call the West Midlands home - including at Coventry's Gigafactory site.
- Tackle youth unemployment, with major investment in apprenticeships, free training and related travel for those on low incomes, and introduce careers advisors for 40 schools so no-one gets left behind.

RESTORE PRIDE IN OUR TOWNS AND CITY CENTRES

- Rapidly deploy the £1 billion war chest the region has assembled to deliver schemes that significantly improve our town and city centres, especially in the Black Country.
- Seize the opportunities of the Mell Square and Gracechurch redevelopments to enhance Solihull town centre and transform Sutton Coldfield town centre.
- Review our region's heritage pubs and buildings to ensure they're properly protected and where necessary brought back to use – like insisting on the 'brick by brick' rebuilding of the Crooked House pub.
- Provide funding to turn our village, town and city centres into event hotspots to boost footfall and restore civic pride, and bring more high profile events to the region including the European Athletics Championships.

HELP REDUCE YOUR ENERGY BILLS AND TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

- Deliver the most ambitious retrofitting programme in the country to help make homes warmer, more energy efficient, and cut energy bills.
- Reduce the cost of energy bills to small businesses through our bespoke energy support scheme.
- Continue making our public transport cleaner and greener, delivering more electric buses and trains, building more cycle routes and expanding the electric vehicle charging network, all to help meet our 2041 Net Zero target.
- Protecting green spaces across the region, plant a million trees as part of our West Midlands Virtual Forest, and support community groups through our "green grants".

GETTING THE BEST FINANCIAL DEAL FOR THE REGION

- Keep the cost of the Mayoralty low, with a track record of no mayoral tax for seven years running, and no intention of implementing one in the future.
- Making sure Investment is spread fairly across the region, not just in Birmingham City Centre.
- Bring in billions more government funding and private sector investment to create new jobs in the West Midlands.

In addition to my key priorities:
15 NEW IDEAS FOR 2024-2028

- **Back plans for a new SXSW-style tech, music and creative festival** in the West Midlands as part of our plans to make the region's technology industry globally competitive.
- **Accelerate the pace of building new transport infrastructure in the region**, with a **new Infrastructure Acceleration Plan** for the West Midlands, including providing cash and expertise from the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to councils where they need it.
- **Build a new flagship traffic-free cycling and walking route from Birmingham to Coventry via Solihull** using the HS2 current construction roads.
- **Triple the delivery of new social housing in the region**, using the Affordable Homes Programme funding secured from Government in the latest Devolution Deal.
- **Help more homeless people by expanding Housing First, providing move-on accommodation, and encouraging 'ethical' supported accommodation providers** into the West Midlands.
- **Appoint a dedicated Black Country Regeneration Commissioner** to work with local councils on speeding up and delivering their plans, particularly focused on regenerating local centres.
- **Launch an international design competition to design a bridge or equivalent masterplan design** to link between Colmore Row and the Jewellery Quarter.
- **Set up a new 'First Impressions' Fund** to allow community groups to clean up and improve their areas - particularly focusing on areas where there are not existing funding sources like Business Improvement Districts.
- **Fund 40 dedicated full-time careers advisors in some of the most challenging schools in the West Midlands**, to build relationships with young people and guide them through their career options.
- **Kick off the most ambitious retrofit and energy efficiency programme in the country** for both people's homes and business premises.
- **Explore plans for an Eden Project West Midlands**, as a visitor attraction and environmental research centre.
- **Launch a Matchday Travel Taskforce**, bringing together Transport for West Midlands, transport operators, councils, and supporter groups to find ways to improve travel to and from games.
- **Agree a new Creative Arts Devolution Deal with Government, including additional arts funding for the West Midlands**, further support for local institutions, such as whether the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and its collections could be supported sustainably with national funding.
- **Develop a West Midlands Languages Plan**, examining how the languages of all our diverse communities could help young people's careers and grow the West Midlands economy through links to communities around the world.
- **Lead a bid to host the Parliament of World Religions in the West Midlands in 2027**, and invite a West Midlands faith representative to become a formal observer member of the WMCA Board.

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CREATE JOBS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERYONE

PROMISES KEPT: 2021-2024

Commitments	Action	Kept
“Create at least 100,000 jobs and training opportunities”	Oversaw an increase of 100,000 jobs across the region in the two years after COVID, and provided training for more than 135,000 people.	
“Develop a globally competitive tech sector”	Gained momentum in the tech sector with successful industry events, strong growth in startup numbers and attracted new tech investments in the region , such as the National UK Telecoms Lab in Solihull.	
“Reinvigorate our creative industries”	Supported the development of the creative sector through Create Central , including the opening of the new Digbeth Loc Studios, and personally agreed a partnership with the BBC which is delivering a new regional HQ, filming in the region and jobs moving to the West Midlands.	
“Grow trade & Investment, bringing new jobs to the region”	Secured record levels of inward investment, making the West Midlands one of the highest performing regions in the country, and delivered a successful Trade, Tourism and Investment Programme at the Commonwealth Games, improving the perception of Birmingham and the West Midlands across the world.	

KEY COMMITMENTS: 2024-2028

Raising our ambition: grow the West Midlands economy faster than London	Grow the West Midlands economy faster than London, at an average rate of 2% a year from now until 2030, and create 425,000 new jobs and training opportunities over the next four years	
Focus on the highly-paid jobs of the future, in particular in the tech sector	Back the ambitious plans for FutureFest, a new SXSW-style tech and creative festival , and maintain our focus on digital: attracting technology companies to the region , and giving our young people the skills they need to compete in this industry.	
Tailored support for each sector	Work with industry experts to deliver what those firms need to compete globally , for example lab space for life sciences, coding talent for tech, support with electrification for automotive, and production spend in the region for the creative industry.	
Maintain our position as the leading inward investment region outside London	Keep on attracting major new inward investments in sectors the West Midlands has existing strengths in, and support local centres, particularly in the Black Country in raising their profile and attracting national and international companies.	

DELIVERING THE WEST MIDLANDS PLAN FOR GROWTH

In 2022, we launched our West Midlands Plan for Growth as a Combined Authority, which sets out how we will deliver a strong regional economy over the next ten years. The plan sets out detailed plans for:

- **Building on the strengths** of our eight ‘primary clusters’, such as professional services, automotive and aerospace manufacturing and health and medtech.
- **Targeting the technologies of the future** in our ‘nascent clusters’, like VLR, 5G and eCommerce.
- **Improving regional transport, building more homes and ensuring our people have the skills** needed to do these better paid jobs in the future.
- **Attracting new firms and investment** into the region to create jobs for local people.
- Ensuring that the **opportunities created in a strong economy can be shared by everyone** in the region.

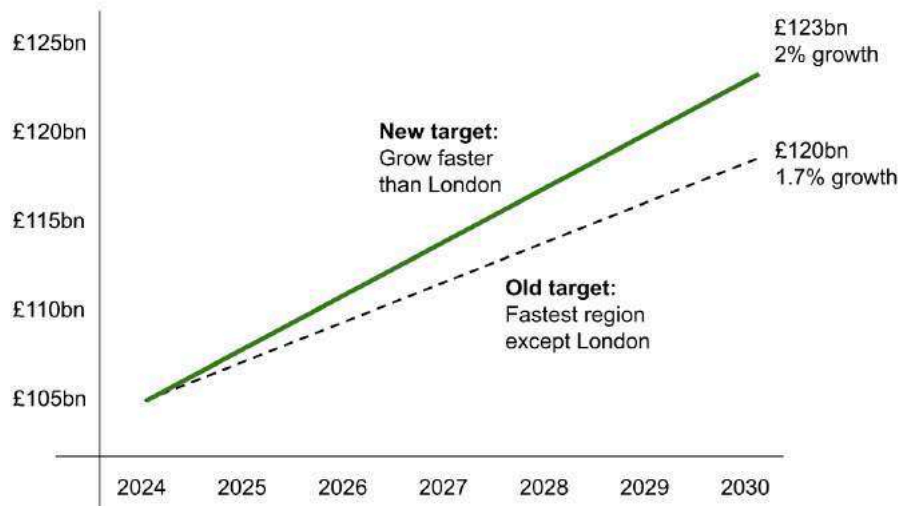
RAISING OUR AMBITION: GROW THE WEST MIDLANDS ECONOMY FASTER THAN LONDON

The West Midlands was one of the wealthiest regions in Europe in the 1960s, but we have seen our economy decline relative to other places in the last sixty years. More recently, in the decade before 2020, we were consistently the fastest growing region outside London. **It’s time that we reclaim our place as an economic powerhouse within the UK.**

The target of returning to being the fastest growing region in the country outside London was right while the region was recovering from COVID-19, but now we must increase the level of our ambition. **Therefore if re-elected as Mayor, I will work to grow the West Midlands faster than London between now and 2030.**

This means:

- **Creating 425,000 new jobs and training opportunities** over the next four years: 125,000 new jobs and 300,000 training opportunities, based on our performance in the last two years.
- **Doubling the total jobs growth target for key high-growth sectors alone**, from 44,800 to 87,000 additional jobs created by 2030.
- **The West Midlands will need to grow at an average rate of 2% a year from now until 2030**, seeing the region grow to at least £123 billion of GVA by 2030.
- **Assertively pursuing new business clusters**, for example artificial intelligence, 5G adoption, eCommerce and space technology, not just growing our existing strong sectors.



SUPPORTING OUR AUTOMOTIVE AND ADVANCED MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Manufacturing, and in particular the car industry has been the traditional strength of the West Midlands economy, providing generations of solid well-paid work for local people. We have world-class firms in many different types of manufacturing, including rail technology, automotive, aerospace, metals and materials. However these firms face a number of challenges, and **as Mayor, I will continue to champion these businesses.**

Whether it is trade rules and tariffs to export goods, or support with high energy bills, **I will always make the case for our local industries with the Government.** The Mayor also needs to be out there making the case for further inward investment, particularly at a time when new technologies like battery and electric vehicles are changing the industry so rapidly. From our own resources, whether they be funding for new innovation or skills training and careers advice for young people, **we must support the great West Midlands manufacturing sector.**

Progress made:

- **Supported our biggest employer, Jaguar Land Rover, in their transition to electric vehicles,** and returning to profit, while protecting all their plants in the West Midlands.
- **Championed the R&D centres which support our manufacturing cluster,** such as Warwick Manufacturing Group and the Manufacturing Technology Centre, and saw the High Value Manufacturing Catapult move their headquarters to Innovation Birmingham.
- **Invested £18 million of regional funding in the National Battery Industrialisation Centre in Coventry,** to develop and commercialise the new battery technology required for the electrification of the automotive and wider manufacturing industries.
- **Secured Investment Zone status for the battery gigafactory site at Coventry Airport,** with new tax incentives, and made the case directly to a number of potential investors in the Coventry Gigapark.
- **Supported the development of the Wolverhampton Green Innovation Corridor, and secured Investment Zone status** for the area from the Springfield Campus, including Wolverhampton Science Park and stretching up the Stafford Road towards the M54, which is expected to create 1,220 new jobs.
- **Encouraged new investment in the West Midlands from India, including leading a trade mission** and fostering more collaboration with Indian companies in the automotive supply chain, for example meeting with the Automotive Component Manufacturers' Association in India.
- **Helped to fund Wolverhampton College's new Electric Vehicle and Green Technologies Training Centre,** training thousands of young people to specialise in the mechanics and engineering of electric vehicles, **new facilities at Sandwell and Dudley Colleges** for electric vehicle training, and **opened the new Greater Birmingham and Solihull Institute of Technology,** which has had Mayoral backing for many years.
- **Encouraged new inward investment into R&D and manufacturing the West Midlands,** such as the new Norton Motorcycles facility, and the new ZF Technical Centre in Solihull.
- **Trained 10,000 people in engineering and manufacturing since 2019,** with a £22 million investment from the Combined Authority's skills funding.
- **Bought British manufactured steel for our Metro network.**
- **Cleaned up sites for new manufacturing space,** such as SPARK / Phoenix 10 in Walsall, and **supported local businesses like Drywall Steel Sections in Wolverhampton in building new manufacturing facilities.**
- **Supporting local businesses in adopting new technology to grow their businesses,** for example the Made Smarter initiative supporting over 2,600 jobs in the West Midlands across 370 West Midlands manufacturing businesses.
- **Secured £24 million to help local businesses to cut their energy bills,** particularly energy intensive manufacturing firms, and raised issues around the hiking of energy contracts with Ofgem.

- **Funded the Manufacturing Supply Chain Transition Programme to help firms moving from their traditional business models into new sectors**, with the aim of supporting over 150 businesses.
- **Agreed a Regional Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Training Plan**, and **worked with industry groups on specific initiatives to support local firms in their sectors**, for example, supported the Midlands Aerospace Alliance by funded the PIVOT Cross-Sector Innovation Programme with aerospace manufacturers in the region.
- **Established Business Growth West Midlands to bring together business support programmes**, align them with the West Midlands Plan for Growth and make them easier for businesses to navigate.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Champion our regional manufacturers** from major international firms such as Jaguar Land Rover, Geely Group down to local small and medium-sized West Midlands firms.
- **Make the most of Investment Zones at Coventry Gigapark and Wolverhampton Green Innovation Corridor**, using the tax incentives to attract international investment, in particular **landing a major investor into the Gigafactory in Coventry** and get construction underway.
- **Target our skills funding at the manufacturing and engineering sector**, expanding existing courses, funding new facilities and developing new courses where technology is changing (for example for hydrogen powered aerospace, or autonomous vehicles).
- Continue our work to **reduce energy bills for manufacturers, both through direct Government support and retrofit**, and lobby for cheaper and easier grid connections for new manufacturing facilities.
- **Support the development of new manufacturing space in the West Midlands**, using our brownfield remediation and loan funds including at SPARK in Walsall, the Coventry Gigapark and in the Wolverhampton Green Innovation Corridor.
- **Strengthen our autonomous vehicle testbed programme**, securing further Government funding and making the most of the Government's commitments in the latest Devolution Deal to make the West Midlands a centre of this new technology, including allowing on-road trials of connected and autonomous vehicles.
- **Lobby for new Government funding for green manufacturing tech priorities** such as a Battery Safety Centre, a Battery EV and Power Electronics Recycling R&D Accelerator, and a Clean-Tech Co-Investment Fund, all with Warwick Manufacturing Group, and champion Government schemes which are significant to major regional employers such as the plug-in taxi grant.



Testing new vehicle technology at HORIBA MIRA

KEEP UP OUR CONSTRUCTION AND INFRASTRUCTURE GROWTH

Construction activity in the West Midlands has remained strong over the last few years, with house building and commercial development continuing at pace. Our long-term transport plan has meant investment in infrastructure has never been higher, with Metro extensions, new stations opening and new and upgraded bus, cycle and walking routes across the region. We must capitalise on the billions of pounds of investments in the next few years and **ensure local firms and workers get the most out of these opportunities.**

The sector is ever-changing and we have ensured the West Midlands is at the centre of the shift to greener and more modern construction methods, such as modular building and new brownfield remediation techniques. **Construction in the West Midlands never stands still, and as Mayor I will ensure the sector continues to thrive.**

Progress made:

- **Oversaw a multi-billion pound programme of infrastructure, housing and regeneration construction projects** across the West Midlands, including the Commonwealth Games, new stations and Metro lines, and housing schemes, with a particular focus on cleaning up and building on brownfield sites.
- **Exceeded our ambitious housebuilding targets, building more than our target of 15,257 new homes every year**, benefitting thousands of local people in the construction industry and ensuring we are on track for 215,000 new homes by 2031.
- **Opened the £17.5 million National Brownfield Institute in Wolverhampton**, to research new technologies to clean up and build on brownfield sites, after securing the cash from Government in 2020.
- **Set out new standards for high-quality green buildings** - the Future Homes Standard - based on the recommendations of the Advanced Method of Construction Taskforce, seeing new affordable housing being built to that standard by Midland Heart.
- **Partnered with HS2 to ensure West Midlands locals benefitted from the jobs, contracts and training on offer**, with over 400 firms and over 12,000 people working on the railway, and many thousands more in the housing and regeneration projects around Interchange and Curzon Street stations.
- **Worked hand-in-hand with major construction firms to expand our programme of Construction Hubs**, which give local people training and work experience on major construction sites such as with John Sisk on Great Charles Street in Birmingham, and with Willmott Dixon at Kingshurst.
- **Supported Balfour Beatty's Skills Academy** with funding to bring over 3,000 jobs to people across the region over the next four years, and the new Transport Rail and Infrastructure Academy (TRIA) training centre in Dudley.
- **Sought to use local contractors and materials where possible in our projects**, for example buying British Steel for the West Midlands Metro extension to Dudley and Brierley Hill, and working with local contractors like McAuliffe.
- **Expanded the WMCA Construction Gateway programme to offer construction skills to people who were unemployed or wanted to change jobs**, and held construction job fairs to help young people understand the right paths into the industry.
- **Undertaken a regional review of Advanced Manufacture in Construction**, and agreed a roadmap of actions to grow the sector in the West Midlands, including supporting firms such as Green Square Accord in Walsall, and ModPods near Coventry.



Meeting participants in the Construction Skills Hub at Great Charles Street in Birmingham

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Deliver the multi-billion pound Combined Authority transport infrastructure, housing and regeneration project pipeline already agreed, and give clearer visibility of the regional project pipeline and upcoming opportunities to construction firms**, exploring whether there is more we can do to support local firms in the WMCA's procurement processes.
- **Continue to attract major investment deals, which will fund new property projects in the region**, building on the existing £4 billion committed by pension fund L&G and the £2 billion committed by developer Segro.
- **Champion additional capital investment from Government into West Midlands infrastructure, housing and regeneration schemes**, for example HS2 and an improved rail link to Manchester, to keep a buoyant construction market in the region, making the most of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, the new regional Single Settlement, new regional control over the affordable housing programme.
- **Double down on our investments in construction skills training**, particularly for young people, with new courses, new construction training hubs, and **develop and support specialist construction skills such as restoration and heritage buildings**, to support our efforts to preserve and enhance the region's historically significant buildings.
- **Support local authority planning departments where possible using WMCA resources and staff**, to speed up the development process in the region, and champion the case for Government to permit the ringfencing of income for council planning departments.
- **Commission an expert review ("Land Commission 2") into the housing & regeneration progress and powers** of the WMCA and the West Midlands Mayor, including examining whether the Combined Authority should have independent Compulsory Purchase powers to speed up developments.
- **Strengthen our region's position as the UK home of Advanced Methods of Construction**, by implementing the recommendations from the **Roadmap for Advanced Manufacture in Construction report**, including identifying projects where high levels of advanced manufacturing can be used, supporting inward investment from manufacturers in the sector, and develop new training options to help upskill existing construction workers.



At the opening of the Transport, Rail & Infrastructure Academy in Dudley

MAKING THE WEST MIDLANDS AN INTERNATIONAL TECH HUB

People in the West Midlands are rightly proud of our region's history of technological innovation. Today, we see digital technology fuelling a new industrial revolution around the world. **With the advent of artificial intelligence, we are only going to see even faster technological change. That presents a huge opportunity for the West Midlands, and we must seize it with both hands.**

As Mayor, I have worked hard to foster our tech and digital sector – a major source of our future prosperity. We have been building digital skills at all levels, backing start-up and scale-ups, and supporting established businesses who want to apply this technology. We are starting to see the results. Goldman Sachs – the international investment bank – has its technology team working from the WeWork in Colmore Row in Birmingham, Gymshark has built its headquarters in Blythe Valley in Solihull, and many more tech businesses are thriving across this region.

We are at the start of a very exciting renaissance in the West Midlands, driven by these new technologies. **If re-elected as Mayor, I will be the champion the West Midlands digital sector needs.**

Progress made:

- **Attracted more high paying tech jobs at major companies in the region**, for example Goldman Sachs, BT and the new Ernst & Young financial services tech hub.
- **Investing around £15 million per year in digital bootcamps and apprenticeships to train people up**, leading to new jobs in the tech and creative industries.
- **Secured £10 million in Government funding for the Smart City Region**, which is focused on improving health through technology in the region, with the goal of reaching 200,000 employees and 200 SMEs in 2024 alone.
- **Partnered with major tech firms like Microsoft** to upskill local people with digital skills weeks, regional learning days, on demand training with LinkedIn and Microsoft and Partner job programmes.
- **Secured investment in new tech workspaces**, such as Bruntwood Sci-Tech's investment around Innovation Birmingham.
- **Supported Birmingham Tech Week as it has grown into the biggest regional tech event in the UK, with 7,500 people attending from 25 countries**, and commissioned the West Midlands Tech Review which bolsters the region's industry and tracks our progress.
- **Launched a new West Midlands Co-Investment Fund**, using money from the WMCA, the West Midlands Pension Fund and private investors to invest in high-growth potential SMEs.
- **Tripled 5G coverage in the West Midlands since 2021**, meaning two thirds of people have access to lightning fast internet connection – the best region in the country outside London.
- **WM5G have developed a Fast Track Legal process to reduce the time it takes to get approval for new 5G mobile phone infrastructure** including small cells from 12 months to 6 weeks, accelerating digital rollout in the region.
- **Appointed Martin Ward as West Midlands Tech Commissioner and a Digital Roadmap Steering Group** to provide leadership to the digital sector in the West Midlands, partnered with TechWM to engage private sector tech businesses, and **agreed a West Midlands Digital Roadmap for 2024-2027** with the Combined Authority Board.
- **Begun to distribute 20,000 digital devices across the region to those who can't afford them or struggle to access digital services**, using the £4 million cash we secured as part of the Deeper Devolution, and a further £2 million for voluntary and community sector organisations to help.
- **Secured an £80 million Government investment in the UK Telecoms Lab (UKTL) based in Solihull** – a secure research centre to test and develop new telecoms technologies including 5G and 6G, with a focus on cyber-security and resilience.
- **Won £3.8 million to work with Jaguar Land Rover to apply 5G in the advanced manufacturing sector, and to trial new ways of using this technology in the health and social care sector**, built a

5G-powered road sensor network to bust traffic congestion, and developed the UK's first 5G enabled tram.

- Won funding for and oversaw programmes which helped over 700 small and medium sized businesses in the West Midlands test 5G technology (WM5G SME adoption & Made Smarter).



Testing new virtual reality headset technology

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Back the ambitious plans for FutureFest, a new SXSW-style tech and creative festival, hosted across the West Midlands with visitors from around the world, and continue to grow Birmingham Tech Week and other industry conferences.**
- **Develop an Artificial Intelligence Action Plan for the region** to understand the opportunities for businesses, the public sector and local residents, to identify the risks and ethical issues, and to plan our proactive response as a Combined Authority, and continue to **fund new training courses to train people in artificial intelligence skills.**
- **Attract new inward investment from global tech companies, and seek to pull in more role models and champions amongst entrepreneurs who have connections with the West Midlands,** to advise and share their networks with young entrepreneurs.
- **Double down on our investment in digital training including bootcamps,** using the Combined Authority's devolved skills funding – working with colleges, private providers, bootcamps and online providers.
- **Radically improve careers advice for young people regarding careers in the digital and tech sectors,** based on the new powers in the Deeper Devolution Deal, and explore whether the Combined Authority could launch a **new initiative to encourage computer science and coding in secondary schools in the West Midlands.**
- **Back TechWM as the delivery body for new programmes to encourage the regional tech sector,** and strengthen the role of Tech Commissioner to represent our region on the national and international stage.
- **Expand the financing options available to West Midlands start-ups and scale-ups,** building on the experience of the West Midlands Co-Investment Fund, and using the expertise of regional investors such as Midven, Midlands Mindforge and the Minerva Angels Network.
- **Make the most of the funding secured to tackle digital exclusion in the region,** to make sure that everyone can benefit from these new technologies, including backing voluntary and community sector projects, and **promoting the use of social tariffs for broadband and mobile services** for those who can't afford to pay full price.
- **Pressure Government and in particular BDUK to confirm additional investment from Project Gigabit in all parts of the West Midlands,** to speed up people's home and business internet speeds and eliminate black spots including in Birmingham, Coventry, Solihull and the Black Country. Continue the accelerated 5G roll out to make sure all areas have access, and preferably access to multiple providers.
- **Explore the ways that digital and artificial intelligence could be used to enable public service reform,** for example capital investment in new digital tools to make local government more efficient.

BACKING THE WEST MIDLANDS HEALTH AND LIFE SCIENCES ECONOMY

We have a world-class health and life sciences industry cluster in the West Midlands which produces cutting-edge research and innovation, and works closely with the NHS in the region. The perception had been that Oxford, Cambridge and London dominated this sector, but gradually the West Midlands is building a reputation as a med-tech powerhouse. Our ambition is to turn the Golden Triangle into the Golden Kite, putting the West Midlands up as a fourth internationally-competitive UK location in the health and life sciences industry.

Our regional competitive advantages are existing strengths in certain fields such as medical devices, and the close collaboration between private companies, researchers and our healthcare providers. We are building substantial new space for growth in this sector both in Selly Oak, Aston and at Arden Cross. **Our health and life sciences sector can be even stronger, and I commit my full support as Mayor.**

Progress made:

- **Oversaw the completion of Phase 1 of the Birmingham Health Innovation Campus**, after securing Government funding and supported the West Midlands HealthTech Accelerator, with an additional £14.5 million funding from the West Midlands Innovation Accelerator programme with Innovate UK.
- **Attracted significant investments in the region by Bruntwood Sci-Tech** in both the Birmingham Knowledge Quarter and the Birmingham Health Innovation Campus in Selly Oak, and **seen inward investment by firms such as Celadon and Thermos Fisher Scientific.**
- **Agreed a joint Regional Health Science and Care Services Training Plan with local education providers and the NHS**, with detailed plans for how people can train as nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapist, radiographer, pharmaceutical technicians, dental nurses, medical secretaries, and nurse associates.
- **Set up the £25 million West Midlands Co-Invest Fund to invest in innovative new companies**, starting with £250,000 for health-tech firm Medmin.
- **Completed the upgrade of University station**, which provides regional and national rail links to the life sciences cluster in Selly Oak and Edgbaston.
- **Supported the proposals for new Community Diagnostic Centres** in South Birmingham, Coventry, the Black Country, Chelmsley Wood and Washwood Heath.
- **Seen progress on new health facilities across the region**, including the Midland Metropolitan Hospital in Sandwell, the new Accident & Emergency department in Walsall, the Heartlands Ambulatory Care and Diagnostics Centre, following successful funding bids championed as Mayor.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- Use the Birmingham Investment Zone to support the development of the **Aston University Birmingham Knowledge Quarter** with Bruntwood Sci-Tech, and **Curzon Wharf** with the Woodbourne Group, and secure commitment to develop Phase 2 of the **Birmingham Health Innovation Campus in Selly Oak.**
- Work with University of Birmingham, the University Hospital Birmingham, and a global investor to **deliver the UK's first Boron Neutron Capture Therapy specialist cancer hospital** in the West Midlands.
- Support the **development of a new HealthTech campus at Arden Cross** with the University of Warwick.
- **Lobby for new Government funding for med-tech priorities** such as the Clean Rooms for Advanced Therapy Medicinal Product, in vitro Diagnostics Demonstrator, Coventry & Warwickshire Deep Health Accelerator, Birmingham City South allied Health Professionals Campus and a Med-Tech Co-Investment Fund.
- **Strengthen our innovation work with the NHS across the region**, engaging as Mayor with the Integrated Care Boards and creating a structured partnership to drive forward these new technologies, building on the success of projects such as West Midlands 5G.

- **Explore ways that the Rosalind Franklin Laboratory in Leamington Spa, which is currently for sale, could attract new inward investment, provide additional lab space and bolster our region's health and life sciences ambitions.**
- **Explore ways to support the expansion of Accelerating Clinical Trials, the private sector clinical trial delivery vehicle, which is working with global pharmaceutical companies from the US and Europe to other clinical disciplines beyond blood cancer.**
- **Work with Midlands Mindforge to identify and fund promising new spinouts and ventures in the health and medical technology space, and use the West Midlands Co-Invest fund where appropriate as a further funding source.**
- **Provide new skills courses at level 4 and higher to meet skills needs of the life sciences and health industry, working with colleges and the Institutes of Technology.**



Learning about the latest research & development at the University of Birmingham

MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR WORLD-CLASS CREATIVES

The West Midlands boasts a rich history in the creative industries, but over the last few decades we saw a steady decline in the opportunities for creatives in the region, with the closure of major production facilities resulting in many creatives having to seek opportunities elsewhere. However, our recovery is well underway, and with renewed focus and investment in nurturing local talent and reclaiming our position as a hub for artistic innovation and expression.

We have made great progress in our efforts to re-establish the West Midlands as a top creative hub, working with the industry on practical initiatives to foster the next generation in the region. With the BBC moving to a new HQ in Digbeth and the West Midlands becoming the home of shows such as Silent Witness and Masterchef, our creative sector is back. This is just the beginning of our journey, and I will continue to champion the creative industries as Mayor.

Progress made:

- **Successfully lobbied for the relocation of the BBC HQ to Digbeth**, helping to regenerate the Tea Factory and to create hundreds of new creative jobs in the region.
- **Personally negotiated an agreement with BBC Director General Tim Davie** to bring:
 - Record levels of BBC investment in the West Midlands
 - The launch of a BBC Apprentice Hub to benefit over 1,000 young people
 - Silent Witness and Masterchef both moving filming to our region
 - The relocation of the Newsbeat team and the partial relocation of the BBC news data team.
- **Opened the new Digbeth Loc Studios with Peaky Blinders creator Steven Knight**, which will see the filming of the new Peaky Blinders movie.
- **Funded four waves of creative and content skill bootcamps** giving more young people experience in the TV production industry.
- **Ran a series of initiatives through Create Central to energise and support the sector**, such the IP Content Fund to support high-risk, high-reward early ideas, a new writing scheme in Birmingham and Black Country for aspiring scriptwriters, the West Midlands Create Growth Programme to help businesses grow, the trainee programme, and the StoryTown Conference.
- **Backed the leadership of Create Central, the industry group responsible for developing the sector in the West Midlands**, and secured new funding from the British Film Institute to invest in skills in content production.
- **Championed the efforts of charities helping to equip our young people with the skills they need in the creative sector**, for example Catch22's Creative Academy pop up event in Birmingham.
- **Hosted an eSports Games alongside the Commonwealth Games for the first time.**

Plan for 2024-2028:

- Support the BBC as they move to their new premises in Digbeth, and **keep up the pressure to bring more jobs and programming to the region.**
- **Develop new early-stage financing options for small content, creative and gaming companies** in the West Midlands, and explore whether the WMCA should provide direct grant, equity or loan funding.
- **Scale up our creative bootcamps and skills provision** to meet the skills gaps in the sector, including bootcamps, apprenticeships and sector-based work academy programmes.
- **Promote the opportunities for filming in the region**, building on Hollywood successes such as Mission Impossible, Ready Player One, **seeking the support of content studios such as Netflix and Amazon**, and re-examine the right 'Film Office' structure for the region.
- **Lobby for new Government funding for creative industry priorities** such as the Creative Co-Investment Fund.
- **Back new ideas for creative festivals such as FutureFest - the West Midlands' answer to SXSW, and the Birmingham Jewellery Biennial**, to support the region's jewellery and **attract major international eSports events to the West Midlands.**

BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTH IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

The West Midlands has been very successful at growing our professional services sector over the last ten years, with new firms setting up a presence in the region and existing firms hiring more staff. This strength is built on our skilled workforce and our connectivity both within the West Midlands, and with the rest of the country.

Our three priorities for the sector are making sure that we have the skilled workforce needed by these firms, improving the public transport system so that people can travel across the region to work with each other, and supporting firms in adopting new digital technologies. **As Mayor, I will keep on supporting our strong professional services sector.**

Progress made:

- **Deployed Combined Authority financial support and expertise to support much-needed office developments**, for example at Coventry Friargate, Longbridge and Arden Cross.
- **Attracted more professional services firms into the region**, creating thousands more jobs which are easily accessible to local people, with high-quality new offices for firms such as Arup, Goldman Sachs and Grant Thornton.
- **Secured further relocation of public sector jobs to the West Midlands**, such as the audit watchdog the Financial Reporting Council, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in Wolverhampton, the Department for Transport in Birmingham, and secured Government commitment to opening the Birmingham 3 Hub which could house up to 4,000 civil servants by 2028.
- **Made improvements to commuter services on the transport network**, to allow professional services workers to travel into our town and city centres quickly and comfortably when they need to, for example upgraded trains and new stations, and **kept fares low for commuters** who use public transport to get into their work, providing **new part-week travel passes for those who do not need to be in the office every day**.
- **Supported initiatives to strengthen the local sector** such as Birmingham Professional Services Week and SuperTech WM, and used the WMCA's skills role to develop a **FinTech Skills framework for the region**.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Ensuring the sector has the right talent available**, by for example reviewing the WMCA's skills funding to ensure the courses and funding on offer fulfil the needs of the professional services industry, and exploring whether there are any professional services roles which are suitable for a bootcamp-style approach, providing accelerated training to get young people into highly-paid jobs.
- **Support the further development of prime office space**, capable of attracting new professional services companies to set up in the West Midlands, such as in Coventry and Wolverhampton city centres, at the former John Lewis site in Grand Central and at Arden Cross in Solihull.
- **Back the West Midlands Growth Company's campaigns to attract new financial and professional services firms** to the West Midlands, and consider offering incentives for firms to transfer jobs from their London offices to the region, for example through our Enterprise Zones.
- **Continue to improve the public transport network to make the commute as easy as possible** for those working in professional services in the region, and keep fares as low as possible.
- **Improve connectivity to the rest of the country**, for example secure a commitment to retaining frequent trains to London (including from Coventry and Wolverhampton), and work with the Birmingham Airport to secure new international routes, particularly to Asia and the United States.
- **Convene a major Mayoral Summit to develop an environmental plan for the commercial property sector in the region**, examining issues such as the retrofit of commercial buildings and embedded carbon, and **continue our work to improve 5G and broadband connectivity in homes and business premises**.

EXAWA

n's F Digital Tal



Welcoming international investment from Hexaware at their new Digital Talent Hub in Birmingham

SUPERCHARGE OUR LOW CARBON INDUSTRIES

The global push to reduce carbon emissions provides huge opportunities for West Midlands businesses, many of whom are at the cutting edge of low carbon technologies. Building a strong green industrial cluster in the region has already begun, but **we must double down on this sector over the next four years if we are to reap the benefits for local people.**

Supporting the automotive and manufacturing supply chain so that it can adapt and develop the new technologies which are needed to move to electric vehicles is vital. Beyond that, we have existing strengths in recycling, retrofit, energy generation and hydrogen to build on. **If we get this right, we will create tens of thousands of new highly-paid jobs in the region, and secure the future for the next generation.**



Showing Chancellor Jeremy Hunt the West Midlands Gigafactory site at Coventry Airport

Progress made:

- **Secured Investment Zone status for the battery gigafactory site at Coventry Airport**, with new tax incentives, and made the case directly to a number of potential investors in the Coventry Gigapark.
- **Invested £18 million of regional funding in the National Battery Industrialisation Centre in Coventry**, to develop and commercialise the new battery technology required for the electrification of the automotive and wider manufacturing industries.
- **Supported the development of the Wolverhampton Green Innovation Corridor, and secured Investment Zone status** for the area from the Springfield Campus, including Wolverhampton Science Park and stretching up the Stafford Road towards the M54, which is expected to create at least 1,200 new jobs.
- **Supported the expansion of regional low carbon R&D centres** such as HORIBA-MIRA and the Birmingham Energy Innovation Centre in Tyseley, and continued to support the Energy Research Accelerator and the Energy Systems Catapult.
- **Funded skills training for green jobs, for example through provider Retrofit Academy**, and opened new training facilities for low carbon jobs such as the Green Lane campus at Walsall College.
- **Secured around £85 million of Government funding to drive retrofit schemes in the region**, which has helped to kick start the demand for local retrofit businesses and skills, whilst reducing carbon emissions & helping people face the challenges of rising fuel bills.
- Secured a commitment from Government in the Deeper Devolution Deal, that **net zero and retrofit Government funding for the region is to be under West Midlands control from 2025**, as part of the WMCA's single settlement.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Complete the final stages of negotiations, and get construction started on the battery gigafactory at Coventry Airport**, and secure further inward investment alongside the gigafactory at Greenpower Park and at other developments in Coventry and Warwickshire, working with the local authorities.
- **Attract major new international investments in the Wolverhampton Green Innovation Corridor**, and support Wolverhampton Council and the University of Wolverhampton with their redevelopment plans.
- **As the demand for skilled retrofit engineers increases, ramp up the funding for skills and training in these green jobs** such as heat pump installers, glaziers and retrofit engineers.
- **Keep up the campaign to devolve the Energy Company Obligation** which is paid by energy companies, so that we can put it towards our Net Zero plans and control ourselves as a region.
- **Support the development of new manufacturing space in the West Midlands**, using our brownfield remediation and loan funds including at SPARK in Walsall.
- **Lobby for new Government funding for green manufacturing tech priorities** such as a Battery Safety Centre, a Battery EV and Power Electronics Recycling R&D Accelerator, and a Clean-Tech Co-Investment Fund, all with Warwick Manufacturing Group, and champion Government schemes which are significant to major regional employers such as the plug-in taxi grant.
- **Develop a new industry cluster specialising in the recycling of batteries, building on the existing investment by Veolia in a new facility in Minworth** which will already have the capacity to recycle 20% of the UK's end-of-life EV batteries by the end of 2024, **and the LiBatt Recycling facility in Wolverhampton.**

BUILD ON OUR STRONG INWARD INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE

As a region, we have had a great run in the last few years, with booming investment in the region. In 2022-2023, the West Midlands attracted 181 major inward investment projects, more than Scotland and Wales combined, creating over 8,200 new jobs. The West Midlands Growth Company saw a 171% increase in the number of recorded projects, and has been at the heart of our success.

Markets are changing, and India now rivals the USA as a top investor in the region with technology-led investments featuring prominently. The Commonwealth Games was also an important part of our success, putting the West Midlands on the map with global leaders. To keep up this strong performance, we need to keep up our proactive work in chasing down potential investors, and competing with other regions in Europe and the UK. **To prosper as a region, we need to keep doing business with the world.**

Progress made:

- In 2022-2023, the West Midlands attracted 181 major inward investment projects, more than Scotland and Wales combined, creating over 8,200 new jobs.
- Delivered the successful Trade, Tourism and Investment programme for the Commonwealth Games, bringing in an estimated 2,600 new jobs from 60 foreign investment projects, and over £17 million from tourism and conferences in 2022 alone.
- Top UK region for attracting new jobs and investment, with more than Scotland and Wales in 2022-2023, overtaking the South East region.
- Secured further relocation of public sector jobs to the West Midlands, such as the audit watchdog the Financial Reporting Council, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in Wolverhampton, the Department for Transport in Birmingham, and secured Government commitment to opening the Birmingham 3 Hub which could house up to 4,000 civil servants by 2028.
- Attracted more jobs into the region such as Novacomms, Hexaware, the expansion of Lloyds Bank in Birmingham, and ensured a specific focus on new investments in areas outside Birmingham City centre, for example Talbots Law and Harvey Norman in Dudley, the UK National Telecoms Lab and Norton Motorcycles in Solihull, CBS and E-Propelled in Coventry, Cemen-Tech in Sandwell, and new investment from Ibstock in Walsall.



Presenting the West Midlands India Partnership on a trade mission to India

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Keep on attracting major new inward investments by continuing our rigorous targeted approach** to businesses in sectors the West Midlands has existing strengths in.
- **Focus my time as Mayor on landing major regional investments**, such as the gigafactory, Arden Cross and occupiers for the region's Investment Zones, **and supporting local centres such as Sutton Coldfield, the Black Country, Solihull** in raising their profile and attracting national and international companies.
- **Make the most of the arrival of HS2 to attract more jobs into the West Midlands** from both national firms based in London and from international companies.
- **Double down on our existing major employers, such as Jaguar Land Rover**, to encourage them to make further investments in the region and safeguard jobs into the future.
- **Launch a review of the ways for the West Midlands to increase its export performance**, including identifying practical ways to help smaller businesses grow by exporting to new markets, building on the West Midlands International Strategy.
- **Secure a sustainable funding settlement for the West Midlands Growth Company** to enable them to continue their successful inward investment and job creation work, alongside the WMCA's Economic Growth strategy.
- **Keep up the campaign for powers and funding for trade and investment to be handed to the region, rather than run by London.**
- **Secure as many relocations of Government jobs as possible** from London to the West Midlands, particularly in those areas where we have existing talent and sector strengths such as construction, infrastructure, life sciences, transport and professional services.



Trying out a new motorcycle at the new Norton facility in Solihull

CHAMPIONING OUR HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM BUSINESSES

Locals will tell you that the West Midlands is a superb destination for visitors, you've just got to know where to go. Our hospitality and tourism sectors are huge employers in the region, including cafes, bars, restaurants, hotels, theatres, concert halls, and conference centres. **Coventry City of Culture and the Commonwealth Games showcased what we could do as a region, and we must build on that success.**

My role as Mayor is to support our region's businesses, whether that is providing practical support, championing their interests to the Government, or addressing some of the underlying issues we have in the region like transport connectivity. **Hospitality and tourism can be a substantial part of our future prosperity as a region - we must get behind them.**

Progress made:

- **Made the most of the Birmingham Commonwealth Games to raise the profile of Birmingham and the West Midlands** around the UK and the world.
- Delivered the **Trade, Tourism and Investment Programme alongside the Commonwealth Games**, to attract new trade and investment into the region, create jobs for local people, and **attracting a record 141 million visitors to the region in 2022.**
- **Set up the Major Events Fund to attract major international conferences to the region**, and secured the Kabaddi World Club in 2025 and the European Athletics Championships in 2026, and the ITS World Congress in 2027.
- **Appointed restaurateur Alex Claridge as Night-Time Economy Advisor to convene the sector** and co-ordinate the WMCA's support for the sector, and **launched the Women's Night Safety Charter**, which has been signed up to by nearly 100 businesses.
- **Championed local venues** for example through our campaign to list heritage pubs in the region, and supported efforts to retain venues such as the Crown in Birmingham.
- **Supported the development of visitor attractions in the region**, such as the Black Country Living Museum and West Midlands Walking Trail, and **set up the West Midlands Tourism Awards to celebrate the sector.**
- **Secured the new headquarters of Visit Britain and Visit England**, the Government agencies responsible for encouraging tourism, in Birmingham, against fierce competition from other cities.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Grow visitor numbers using the Major Events Fund, and explore ways to increase their 'dwell time' in the region**, such as developing a West Midlands pass, to give discounted access to attractions across the region.
- **Build on the successful recovery of the business tourism and conference sector**, which has already grown back to pre-pandemic visitor numbers.
- **Make the most of the 2024 Sport Accord industry conference in Birmingham**, with senior leaders from every major sporting body coming to see what the West Midlands has to offer.
- **Back the ambitious plans for FutureFest, a new SXSW-style tech and creative festival**, hosted in Birmingham with visitors from around the world, and continue to grow and other industry conferences.
- **Work with campaign groups, Birmingham City Council and the landowners to find a suitable development proposal for Station Street in Birmingham** which retains the heritage, and the creative uses of the Crown and the Electric Cinema, and work to secure public funding to make this happen.
- **Make hospitality and the night-time economy a core part of our efforts to regenerate high streets and town centres** across the West Midlands.
- **Explore new visitor attraction concepts in the region**, such as exploring a new Eden Project in the West Midlands.





- Continue to steer our regional efforts based on the expert advice of the West Midlands Tourism and Hospitality Advisory Board and the Night-Time Economy Advisor.
- Commit to new night bus services to allow people to get home safely after a night out supporting the night-time economy in our local centres.









Pulling a pint at the new hospitality skills and learning centre at Edgbaston Stadium with Northfield MP Gary Sambrook

DELIVER THE 2040 TRANSPORT PLAN

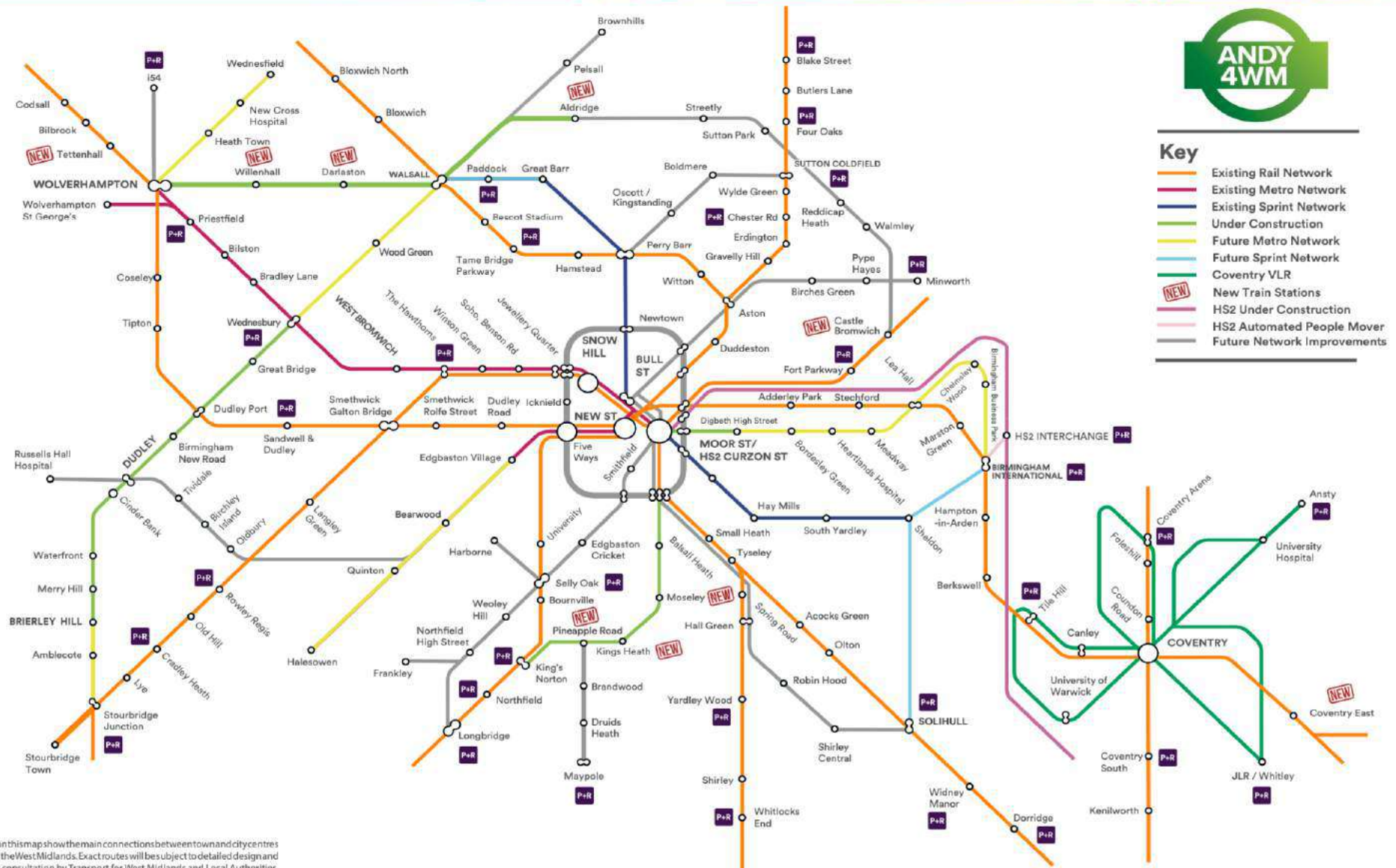
PROMISES KEPT: 2021-2024

Commitments	Action	Kept
Continue to increase transport investment	Brought in more funding for transport infrastructure , securing £6.1 billion investment to realise our 2040 Transport Plan, and sorted the finances of transport schemes which were facing severe challenges due to COVID and inflation.	
Make massive progress delivering our long-term transport plan	Led the transformation of the West Midlands transport network, by setting out a vision of the network in 2040 , chasing projects to completion and securing funding for new projects .	
Deliver cleaner, safer, quicker buses with low fares	Built on the success of the four-year bus fare freeze , rolled out more electric buses including making Coventry's fleet all-electric. Funded and developed plans for new prioritised rapid bus routes .	
Take bold steps to get people cycling and walking	Agreed a major programme of new segregated cycle routes and completed the rollout of the West Midlands bike hire scheme, with Adam Tranter as Mayor's Commissioner for cycling and walking and Transport for West Midlands .	

KEY COMMITMENTS: 2024-2028

Deliver fare capping and keep fares low	Implement contactless payment and fare capping across all modes of transport , saving travellers money and making it a seamless experience, and keep fares as low as possible	
Win more cash to support the West Midlands transport revolution	Secure more money from Government to spend on transport projects , and manage our own finances prudently , so that we keep funding more infrastructure and keep fares low	
Make the most of the opportunity of HS2 for the West Midlands	Ensure that West Midlands residents get the benefits of HS2 , such as more regular local services from the freed up capacity, and keep pushing for better connectivity with Manchester and the North .	
Continue the massive build out of the West Midlands transport network	Finish new stations, new Metro lines, new rapid bus routes, new cycle lanes , in the biggest infrastructure surge since Victorian times.	
Insist on the highest possible standards of punctuality and customer service	Hold train and bus operators to account for their performance , insisting on the highest possible standards, like I did in my days running John Lewis.	
Take a pragmatic approach to keeping bus fares low and improving the network	Review all the options for the ownership and operation of buses in the West Midlands, to get to a pragmatic, non-ideological long-term plan for better buses in the region .	

ANDY STREET'S UPDATED TRANSPORT PLAN FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS



A WORLD-CLASS LOCAL RAIL NETWORK

Rail remains at the heart of our public transport network in the West Midlands, getting thousands of people around the region every day. Since COVID, passenger numbers have come back strongly, and we have seen substantial improvements in local services and their reliability. But there's more work to do to get to a world-class local rail network.

We've been able to bring in billions of pounds of new Government funding for rail infrastructure in the West Midlands, and this has meant that stations which were closed sixty years ago will be opened to new passenger services in the next couple of years. Our fleet of trains has had major upgrades with more to come, and we have ambitious plans to go even further.

Progress made:

- **Worked with operators to upgrade trains and increase the number of carriages on key routes**, including:
 - New all-electric fleet for the Cross-City Line
 - New trains for Birmingham to Walsall and Birmingham to Wolverhampton services
 - New rolling stock for the Birmingham to Hereford and Birmingham to Shrewsbury routes
- **Oversaw the recovery of the** number of rail journeys in the West Midlands, returning to over 85% of pre-pandemic passenger numbers.
- **Successfully persuaded the Government and operators to introduce new more flexible fares, such as Flexi Season tickets which allow you to travel any 8 days in 28 days**, to reduce costs for commuters who want to spend more time working from home.
- **Completed upgrades at University station and Perry Barr station**, both important gateways for visitors during the Commonwealth Games in summer 2022.
- Began construction of **new stations in Moseley, Kings Heath and Pineapple Road in Stirchley**, after eighty years of no passenger trains, ready to open for new services in 2024, **new stations at Darlaston and Willenhall** for new services in 2025, and **began construction of Aldridge Station**.
- **Secured £1.75 billion funding from Government for the Midlands Rail Hub**, including the Bordesley Chords, extending Camp Hill line services to Longbridge and Northfield, the fourth platform at Snow Hill station, improvements at Kings Norton station and better links to Leicester, Nottingham and Derby.
- **Won substantial funding through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement**, which can be used to develop new rail infrastructure, including a new station at Aldridge and an improved Witton station.
- **Developed plans for new rail stations across the region** and secured additional funding for individual stations, including confirmed the feasibility of an upgraded Witton station. See the table below for a status update on all new rail stations in the West Midlands.
- Held operators to account for their performance as Chair of the West Midlands Rail Executive, including seeing **West Midlands Trains go from being the worst performing operator in the country to amongst the best**.
- **Campaigned successfully against the closure of ticket offices** at rail stations across the region.



At the site of the new Aldridge Station with local MP Wendy Morton



At the site of the new Kings Heath station with the historic wooden sign from the original station

STATUS UPDATE: WEST MIDLANDS RAIL STATIONS

COMPLETED

- Upgraded Coventry Station
- Upgraded Wolverhampton Station
- Upgraded University Station
- Upgraded Perry Barr Station

FUNDED AND UNDER CONSTRUCTION

- Camp Hill Line Stations:
 - Moseley
 - King Heath
 - Pineapple Road (Stirchley)
- Walsall to Wolverhampton Line Stations:
 - Darlaston
 - Willenhall
- Aldridge Station
- HS2 Curzon Street
- HS2 Interchange

FUNDED AND IN DEVELOPMENT

- Midlands Rail Hub
 - Upgraded Kings Norton Station
 - Upgraded Moor Street Station
 - Upgraded Snow Hill Station
- Upgraded Dudley Port Station

IN DEVELOPMENT

- Upgraded Witton Station
- New Castle Bromwich station
- New Coventry East Station
- New Tettenhall Station

NEW UPGRADES TO EXPLORE FOR 2024-2028

- Sutton Park Line
 - New Stations at Walmley, Reddicap Heath, Sutton Park, Streetley
- New Stations at Brownhills and Pelsall
- Upgraded access at Bescot Stadium station
- Upgrading Elephant and Bear line, including bay platform and provision for CBS Arena
- Coventry to Leicester links
- New stations at Balsall Heath, The Fort, Coventry South

Plan for 2024-2028:

- Keep up the pressure on West Midlands Rail and Network Rail to **reinstate the 6 trains per hour service on the CrossCity line** as soon as operationally and commercially possible, and on Avanti to reinstate the 3 trains per hour to London, including from Coventry.
- **Open new rail stations to new services at Moseley, Kings Heath and Hazelwell stations by the end of 2024, and Darlaston and Willenhall by 2025.**
- **Complete the new Aldridge Station, and drive forward the re-opening of the whole Sutton Park Line.**
- **Progress the business cases for new stations at Coventry East, Tettenhall and Castle Bromwich station** then get construction started as soon as we gain the relevant approvals.
- **Deliver upgraded Witton Station in time for games at Villa Park during Euro 2028.**
- **Provide a faster service between Birmingham and Stratford Upon Avon by 2024, and support plans for new direct connections from the region,** including services from Walsall directly to London Euston and new services to Manchester and Piccadilly and Manchester Airport by 2025.
- **Extend new Camp Hill Line services to Northfield and Longbridge** to increase the frequency and reliability of those services, develop the Midlands Rail Hub plans for the Camp Hill chords, providing options to run services into Moor Street, and explore new services, such as **direct trains from Walsall and Wolverhampton to University station.**
- **Provide better disabled access at stations across the region, for example at Bescot Stadium Station in Walsall,** working closely with the Walsall Supporters Trust to ensure successful implementation.
- **Explore the next proposals for new and upgraded rail infrastructure,** such as a new bay platform at Coventry station, improvements to Coventry Arena station and the dualling of sections of the Elephant & Bear line.
- **Use the arrival of the new HS2 station at Curzon Street as an opportunity to review the walking routes, drop-off and pick-up arrangements** at and between Moor Street, New Street and Curzon Street in Birmingham city centre.
- **Deepen our partnership between the West Midlands Rail Executive, Network Rail and Great British Railways,** to secure more regional influence over West Midlands train services, making sure operators maintain high standards of punctuality and reliability across the region.
- **Continue to work with rail operators and our universities to develop new clean rail technologies,** seeking to roll out battery and hybrid technology to our West Midlands train fleet by 2029-33 at the latest.

LEADING THE FIGHT FOR HS2

I have been a vocal supporter of High Speed Two since the project was first developed, because it brings huge benefits to the people of the West Midlands. As the costs have escalated the pressure to cut back the scheme has been enormous, but I have always championed the project, putting the people of the West Midlands above any party politics.

We have secured a commitment to build Phase 1 of HS2 from Birmingham to London Euston in full, but I continue to campaign for improved links to Manchester and the rest of the UK, to realise the benefits of the original national scheme. In the West Midlands, we will make the most of the economic growth opportunities which HS2 brings, and ensure that it will be the people of this region that see the benefits first.

Progress made:

- **Fought for HS2 to go ahead, in the face of the prospect of the full cancellation of the project, and securing commitments from the Prime Minister to:**
 - Build Phase 1 from Birmingham to London Euston in full.
 - Commit to link the line to the West Coast Mainline at Handsacre to improve journey times to the North.
 - Look again at alternative proposals for faster trains from Birmingham to Manchester, based on joint work with Andy Burnham.
 - Commit billions of the pounds saved to local transport schemes in the West Midlands.
- Supported **West Midlands firms in securing £1.72 billion of contracts from HS2, with over 8,000 people currently working in the West Midlands on HS2.**
- Secured Government commitment to the Investment Zone around Curzon Street and the Growth Zone at Arden Cross, which will be used to drive growth around the HS2 stations.
- **Made the most of HS2 coming to the West Midlands to attract billions of pounds of new investment in the West Midlands**, in particular driving regeneration around the stations at Curzon Street and Interchange.

Plan for 2024-2028

- **Ensure that HS2 gets built from London to Birmingham on time**, and win the case with Government for investment in better connections between the West Midlands, to Manchester and to Leeds, working cross-party with other Mayors such as Andy Burnham.
- Get **even more local people and firms working on HS2** design and construction.
- **Use the opportunity of HS2 to secure more inward investment for the region**, particularly around the two HS2 stations.
- As plans are drawn up for the franchise and services being run by HS2, **ensure the ticket prices are fair and service patterns give West Midlands residents the opportunity to benefit** from this new infrastructure.
- **Use the freed-up capacity into Birmingham New Street** to explore additional train services for local residents to stations like direct trains from University station to Birmingham International, Walsall or Wolverhampton.

EXPANDING THE METRO INTO A PROPER NETWORK

Our extensions to the Metro network after many decades of slow progress are one of the most important achievements in my first two terms as Mayor. Securing the money and starting construction of the extensions to Digbeth and to Dudley and Brierley Hill has been a huge challenge. Yet even with the new routes which are under construction, we need to expand it far further to catch up with other global cities, and provide our residents with the good public transport options they rightly expect.

We need to keep pursuing our 2040 Transport Plan and forge ahead with new routes connecting up the region. In years to come, **we can be confident that people in the West Midlands will be better off because of the investment we are making now in our Metro.**



Inspecting progress on the Metro extension in Dudley with council leader Councillor Patrick Harley

Progress made:

- Completed the Metro Extension from **Centenary Square to Five Ways, Edgbaston** in Birmingham, and **finished the extension along Piper's Row to Wolverhampton Rail Station**.
- Made **huge progress on the extension to Dudley (which will open this year)** and **defended the full length of the scheme to Brierley Hill**, securing an additional £60 million to keep the scheme on track.
- **Started work on the Dudley Interchange** which will provide a modern transport hub with Metro, bus and cycle lanes connecting Dudley like never before.
- Insisted on the early construction of a new junction to enable **the Eastside extension to Digbeth, East Birmingham and Solihull**, brought forward the **early construction of the Metro extension to Digbeth** so services can begin as soon as possible, when the HS2 station at Curzon Street is completed, and enabling **early services to the Clayton Hotel**.
- **Won substantial funding through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement**, which is being used to develop new Metro lines in the West Midlands.
- **Invested £43 million in new and extended tram depot facilities in Wednesbury** to support the Metro extensions, creating jobs for local people, **commissioned new state-of-the-art trams** to double our existing fleet.
- **Used our Metro programme to support jobs in the UK supply chain**, for example by ordering 860 tonnes British steel for the construction of the new Metro extension on Wednesbury to Brierley Hill.
- **Conducted a rapid assessment of which lines in the 2040 plan should be prioritised next as part of the West Midlands Transport Plan**, focusing in particular on potential Metro lines from Birmingham to Halesowen along the Hagley Road, Wednesbury to Walsall, Birmingham to Longbridge, Wolverhampton to New Cross Hospital and Wednesfield, Brierley Hill to Stourbridge, and East Birmingham to Solihull line.
- **Kept Metro fares low and oversaw a return of passenger levels** to above their pre-COVID levels.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Complete the Metro extension to Dudley later this year and Brierley Hill by 2027, and get trams running to the Clayton Hotel** (near Moor Street and Birmingham City University) in 2025/26, and the **Eastside metro extension to Digbeth** as soon as HS2 works allow.
- **Prioritise and develop the business cases for new extensions to the Metro network**, securing funding to build them from the Combined Authority's transport capital settlement, and from Enterprise Zone and Investment Zone funding, focusing in particular on potential Metro lines from Birmingham to Halesowen along the Hagley Road, Wednesbury to Walsall, Birmingham to Longbridge, Wolverhampton to New Cross Hospital and Wednesfield, Brierley Hill to Stourbridge, and East Birmingham to Solihull line.
- **Increase the number of in service trams** to increase the frequency of services and reduce overcrowding at rush hour.
- **Commit to keeping Metro fares as low as possible**, whilst running the Metro in a financially responsible way as part of the overall West Midlands transport network.

DEVELOPED LONDON-STYLE CONTACTLESS PAYMENTS AND CAPPING ON OUR TRANSPORT NETWORK

Over the last few years we have made progress on rolling out contactless payments and capping, but there's more work to do so that passengers can travel seamlessly across the West Midlands:

- **Secured the funding from Government to develop and roll out the scheme** to all transport modes, and to include payment by contactless cards, with Swift Go capping from 2025 and contactless from 2027.
- **Passengers will be able to travel by Bus, Rail and Metro seamlessly** through simply tapping in and out with their Swift card.
- **Fares will be capped on a daily and weekly basis** and so passengers will be safe in the knowledge they will never overpay and can continue to travel at no charge once a cap is reached.
- **Users no longer have to grapple with the often complicated process of buying train tickets**, with the process now being simplified and saving rail users time and money each day.
- **Passengers have greater flexibility in planning their journey**, without having to worry about the cost of each mode of travel and can move freely from one mode of travel to another.
- **Coverage of the scheme extends to all seven local authorities across the West Midlands**, and so our region is much better connected and longer commutes are now made much more viable.

IMPROVING BUS SERVICES IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

Our buses are our most widely used form of public transport, relied upon by people across the West Midlands, and passenger numbers have almost recovered to pre-pandemic levels, at a rate much faster than any other city region outside London.

In the last few years, we have worked with operators to improve the reliability, quality and speed of buses, all while holding fares down, so that we can grow the number of people using buses in the region. **These consistent efforts are starting to make a difference, but there's still more work to do.**

Progress made:

- **Oversaw a strong recovery in overall passenger numbers to almost pre-pandemic levels, with commercial passenger numbers now exceeding pre-pandemic levels, and protected the bus network until at least 2025.**
- **Kept bus fares low, freezing the price of key fares for four years from 2017, with key bus fares lower than 2017 and remaining the cheapest city-region in the UK.** We have protected extra discounts and free travel for those who need it most such as young people, older people, and jobseekers.
- **Implemented the national £2 single adult bus journey cap**, and pushed successfully for its extension.
- **Oversaw the rollout of hundreds of new clean buses across the region**, with Coventry having more electric buses than anywhere else outside London
- **Cracked down on anti-social behaviour on buses** by funding new members of the Safer Travel team, and connected buses to the Regional Transport Co-ordination Centre to improve both safety and reliability.
- **Made progress on a range of new rapid bus routes across the region, from securing funding and designing schemes through to the completion of other schemes:**
 - Sprint: A45 Solihull and Airport into Birmingham (Phase 1 completed)

- Sprint: A34 from Birmingham to Walsall (Phase 1 completed)
- Sprint: Walsall to Solihull (Phase 2 under construction)
- Dudley to Druids Heath (under construction)
- Longbridge and Hamstead via A441 (Pershore Road) and B4124 (funded)
- Longbridge and Castle Vale via the A38 (Bristol Rd & Tyburn Rd) (funded)
- West Bromwich and Chelmsley Wood via A41 Soho Road and B4128 (Bordesley Green & The Meadway) (funded)
- Bartley Green and Chelmsley Wood via B4124 (Harborne Road) and B4114 (Washwood Heath Road) (funded)
- **Ensured our construction of these new routes is done in an environmentally aware, conscientious way**, for example saving the trees along A34 Sprint bus route in Walsall, and committing to plant 1,000 new trees along Sprint routes.
- **Agreed a deal with operators to protect the West Midlands bus network** until at least 2025 in the face of the prospect of 30% or more of services being axed.
- **Kicked off the £20 million Passenger Incentive Programme to encourage people to start (or restart) using public transport in the region**, for example by providing discounted tickets for a period of time.
- **Secured substantial new funding for bus improvements, including the Bus Services Improvement Grant and the devolved control of the Bus Service Operators Grant** to incentivise operators to work together with Transport for West Midlands on local priorities.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- Review all the options for the ownership and operation of buses in the West Midlands, **to get to a pragmatic, non-ideological long-term plan for better buses in the region.**
- **Keep pushing bus operators to deliver the highest possible standards of service for passengers, whilst maintaining low fares, through our Enhanced Bus Partnership.**
- **Commit to new night bus services** to allow people to get home after a night out, supporting the night-time economy in our local centres, and extend the hours of operation for key routes for example to Birmingham Airport where early and late services are needed.
- **Deliver full fare capping across all modes of transport and all operators** on both Swift and contactless.
- **Rebuild a new Dudley Interchange, and review the bus stops and waiting areas around Birmingham City Centre**, in particular between Moor Street, Dale End and Curzon Street.
- Improve bus speeds further by finding more opportunities for prioritisation, and introduce new fleet of buses on Sprint routes.
- Work with the bus companies to **keep fares as low as possible**, keep our concessionary fares for apprentices, trainees, and **protect the free travel pass for older people.**
- **Expand the take-up of our schemes to support jobseekers with subsidised fares** through Workwise, and **to provide free tickets for the homeless.**
- **Commit to a long-term plan to protect and improve Ring & Ride services**, including reviewing whether further joint work with councils on accessible transport for those with learning difficulties or disabilities would be possible, particularly where those services are at risk due to Birmingham City Council's financial situation.
- **Build on our trials of demand responsive transport in Solihull and Coventry** and explore whether this new technology could help deliver our Ring & Ride services alongside traditional services.

BUILDING HEALTH INTO OUR STREETS AND GIVING RESIDENTS TRANSPORT INDEPENDENCE THROUGH CYCLING AND WALKING

Congestion, health, the cost of living and climate change are some of the biggest problems facing our region. Giving people more choice on how they travel will help tackle these problems. Enabling more people to walk to school and pedal to the shops will address big issues in a way that benefits all of us.

We have committed record funding to new high-quality infrastructure routes that will give millions of people these choices, every day, making their lives easier and our communities nicer places to be. A number of new routes have already been completed and gradually, we are building a country-leading network that will improve the lives of all who live and work in the region.

I want to ensure people feel safe on our streets and ensure families are protected from the selfish few who endanger others. **Giving everyone in the West Midlands a real choice in how they travel will be a priority for me as Mayor.**

Progress made:

- **Secured £254 million of funding for integrated active travel** from Government as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, in addition to various other funding allocations such as £30 million from the Government's Active Travel Fund.
- **Expanded the highly successful Cycle Hire scheme to all boroughs** across the West Midlands, with over 236,000 journeys of over 501,000 kilometres cycled around the region in 2023 alone. Over 150 new e-bikes have been added to the fleet to make it even more attractive.
- **Appointed the region's first ever Cycling & Walking Commissioner**, to help accelerate plans to get more people moving around the West Midlands by foot or bike.
- **Championed cycling as the most efficient mode of travel around the region during the Commonwealth Games.** Free cycle hire proved a huge success with over 28,000 journeys taken during the Games. Over 25,000 cycle parking spaces across the 13 venues were created to enable easier access by bike.
- **Funded and opened new safe cycle routes across the West Midlands** including the Binley Cycleway (£8.6 million), a new route along the A4124 in Wolverhampton and connecting a series of cycle routes around Walsall (£1 million).
- **Encouraged thousands more women across the region to take up active travel with measures** such as those used by the Saheli Hub in Birmingham who have taught over 3,000 women of all ages how to cycle.
- **Developed a new national trail in the West Midlands forming a loop following the Green Belt around the urban West Midlands.** Work with councils and national bodies such as Natural England and the National Trust is now well under way, to link together even more footpaths.
- **Backed efforts to give parents more choice to leave the car at home and walk to school with their children**, such as supporting the funding of School Streets schemes, and the Living Streets campaign during Walk to School Week.
- **Supported investment in our amazing canal towpaths** through restoration and improved access ramps to make walking and cycling easier along these routes, such as along the Birmingham and Worcester canal.
- **Developed a new design review process with Transport for West Midlands and the Mayor's Cycling & Walking Commissioner** to ensure a high standard of designs to give everyone safe and trusted routes.
- **Secured funding to trial new side road zebras and inclusive crossings** at Warwick University, to help enable visually impaired people to cross cycle tracks safely, pioneering work that will inform national standards.



Riding a West Midlands Cycle Hire bike with members at the Saheli Hub

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Seek agreement from the WMCA Board to dedicate at least £60 million per year from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement 2 (CRSTS 2) funding to new cycling and walking infrastructure**, to give West Midlands residents more transport choice. **This equates to more than £20 per head of population in the West Midlands**, subject to the availability of high-quality local schemes and the approval of the relevant local authorities.
- **Set ambitious cycling and walking modal shift targets** as part of the Transport for West Midlands Local Transport Plan 5 strategy.
- **Maximise the HS2 construction opportunity, by developing new cycling and walking routes which benefits local communities, including:**
 - A flagship new traffic-free cycling and walking route from Birmingham to Coventry via Solihull by utilising the current construction roads.
 - Dramatically improve cycling and walking connections around Curzon Street station
 - Join up the Kenilworth greenway with Berkswell station.
 - Secure funding by working closely with partners for CRSTS 2.
- **Build a new regional network plan, quadrupling the network ambition for walking and cycling, over the existing Starley network.**
 - Proactively roll-out a new unified wayfinding signage scheme and gain approval from Government to use it on streets across the West Midlands.
- **Maximise the new regional network by taking an ambitious new approach to ‘open sourcing’ new cycling and walking links:**
 - Empower local people to drive forward scheme designs.
 - Hold community workshops to co-develop and ensure local support.
- **Boost design and engineering expertise in the Combined Authority to accelerate progress and support local authorities** to accelerate high-quality scheme delivery, and **expand the WM Active Travel Ambition programme** to upskill and share best practice amongst the region’s professionals.
 - Bolster Transport for West Midlands’s engineering expertise to support local authorities in the design of high-quality junctions, such as Cyclops, where requested.
- **Ensure active travel is embedded in plans for the new rapid transit routes (RTR) planned by Transport for West Midlands.**
 - Incorporate cycling and walking provision and connections as part of RTR the scheme design.
 - Ensure active travel and public transport work seamlessly for the user and is a key component of future public transport-funded schemes.
- **Put active travel schemes at the heart of transport decision-making** and ensure it is prioritised over private vehicle capacity, in line with the agreed Local Transport Plan, to create a more liveable and sustainable region. Active travel schemes should enable modal shift, improve road safety and not increase motor vehicle speeds or capacity.
- **Define minimum standards for cycling facilities (including secure parking & bike hire) at bus interchanges, rail and Metro stations across the region**, and set regional standards for all new private developments to embed future travel choice for all.
- **Employ a ‘twin-track’ approach to increasing cycling and walking levels, ensuring capital investment in new routes is routinely accompanied by effective behavioural-change initiatives**, targeted in the areas which benefit from new infrastructure.
- **Re-appoint Cycling & Walking Commissioner** to continue the progress made on active travel in the West Midlands.
- **Review and recommit to the West Midlands Cycle Hire scheme** ensuring it continues to provide value for money.
- **Request joint Powers of Direction on the Key Route Network** as part of further devolution.

- Run a **supervised trial of passengers travelling with bikes on the Midlands Metro** at certain times of day or days of the week.
- **Empower those walking and cycling in highway designs.**
 - Work to secure approval with local authorities for “instant push” pedestrian crossings so walkers are prioritised in high footfall areas.
 - Work to secure an active travel signals upgrade fund which prioritises crossing upgrades and early-cycle release signals at junctions to boost numbers walking to school.
- **Support regional pilots of cargo bike freight operations.**
 - Set up micro-consolidation sites on the edges of town and city centres, where lorries and vans can transfer goods to cargo bikes, minimising the number of large goods vehicles around homes and shops.

GETTING TOUGH ON IRRESPONSIBLE DRIVERS TO IMPROVE ROAD SAFETY

Progress made:

- **Worked closely with West Midlands Police** to give citizens an opportunity to help tackle anti-social use of the roads through third party dashcam reporting. The rate of positive outcomes for cases reported using dashcam footage increased from 4% to 92% after sustained focus by the Cycling & Walking Commissioner.
- **Prioritised reducing road danger across the region, to make active travel more appealing.** Work with the Transport for West Midlands’s road safety working group is now well underway.
- **Updated the Regional Road Safety Action Plan**, based on the ‘Vision Zero’ principle of reducing road traffic incidents.
- **Partnered with local authorities across the region to rollout more average speed cameras** and ensure proper enforcement.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Work with West Midlands Police to increase the resources available to tackle car cruising, street racing, road crime and close passes**, to stamp out dangerous behaviour in our region.
 - Work closely with the Chief Constable to ensure that local policing teams, not just roads policing units, have a responsibility for road safety including anti-social parking and speeding.
 - Re-enable switched off red light cameras at priority areas.
- **Work closely with Government to increase maximum sentences for those guilty of dangerous driving from 2 to 4 years.**
 - Lobby for new criminal charges of ‘Failing to remain at the scene of a fatal collision’ and ‘Failing to remain at the scene of a serious injury collision’.
- **Protect families, elderly people and disabled people by working with Government and local councils to ban pavement parking across the region.**
 - Ensure sufficient resources for enforcement teams to stamp out this anti-social and dangerous practice.
 - Explore the acquisition of innovative solutions to quickly remove badly parked vehicles, including radio-controlled removal robots.
- **Work with West Midlands Police to roll-out Operation Park Safe.**
 - Accept direct submissions of dangerous and obstructive parking.
 - Explore how third-party evidence submissions to council parking enforcement teams could be enabled.



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Visiting the Transport for West Midlands Regional Travel Co-ordination Centre

BUST CONGESTION

Traffic at key blackspots in the region has now increased back to pre-pandemic levels - and is a serious challenge for the West Midlands. Over the past four years however, we've made some promising progress: **enhancing congestion management through the innovative work of our new Regional Transport Co-ordination Centre and making upgrades to public transport infrastructure.**

Progress made:

- **Funded, built and made operational the Regional Transport Co-ordination Centre**, which was particularly effective at keeping athletes and spectators moving during the Commonwealth Games.
- **Ensured that Highways England projects in the region were funded and delivered**, including the A46 Binley flyover, M42 Junction 6 and M6 Junction 10.
- **Opened the new 620 space Park & Ride multi-storey car park at Longbridge station**, and a free 196 space park and ride at Bradley Lane Metro stop.
- **Negotiated the increased Highway Maintenance Fund** meaning all parts of the region will benefit from resurfaced roads, cycle routes and walkways.
- **Launched the Road Sensor Network Project**, which deploys 5G enabled sensors, radar and cameras across the key routes and then uses this real time traffic information to reduce congestion.
- **Successfully introduced drone technology to help tackle congestion across the region**, with drones able to update road users faster and to quickly react to redirect traffic.
- **Oversaw the fast tracking of new Birmingham cross-city bus lanes due to road closures**, to help minimise disruption to passengers due to the closure of Aston Church Road and Saltley Viaduct.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Invest in public transport to provide alternatives for residents instead of having to drive their cars**, for example, opening the Camp Hill Line to Pineapple Road, Kings Heath and Moseley to reduce the congestion through south Birmingham.
- **Improve collaboration between the Regional Transport Coordination Centre, Local Authorities control centres and West Midlands Police** to monitor traffic in the region and keep it moving when there are accidents, including the exploring the deployment of officers at blackspots, for example Holloway Head in Birmingham on weekend afternoons.
- **Explore ways to improve traffic monitoring across the region using new technology**, such as expanding the number of 5G sensors, 5G enabled signals and exploring using AI to predict variable congestion hotspots resulting from large events or inclement weather in certain areas.
- **Continue to take a proactive approach to managing construction traffic in the region**, such as around the HS2 stations at Curzon Street and Interchange in Solihull, and at major regional development sites like Arden Cross and Coventry Airport.
- **Support improvements to road links where it will help the overall transport network in the West Midlands**, for example the building of the M54, M6, M6 Toll link road and improvements to Birchley Island.

MAKING THE WEST MIDLANDS THE HOME OF TRANSPORT INNOVATION

The West Midlands has a great track record of developing new transport technology and the last few years have been no different. These innovations have the potential to support tens of thousands of jobs across the region, and excitingly, local residents stand to benefit the most.

As the hosts of the prestigious global Intelligent Transport Systems World Congress in 2027, we are ideally placed to capitalise on the global interest in our latest transport technologies. From drones, to e-scooters, to autonomous vehicles, **as Mayor I will continue to champion our position as the UK capital of advanced and innovative transport technologies.**

Progress made:

- **Secured the prestigious global Intelligent Transport Systems Conference in Birmingham in 2027**, a chance to showcase our technological innovation to over 15,000 attendees from around the world and attract investment into the region.
- **Improved the regional e-scooter scheme** and rolled it out across the West Midlands, focusing on making it safer and easier to use.
- **Expanded the highly successful Cycle Hire scheme to all boroughs** across the West Midlands, with over 236,000 journeys of over 501,000 kilometres cycled around the region in 2023 alone. Over 150 new e-bikes have been added to the fleet to make it even more attractive.
- **Secured £15 million of funding from the Government for autonomous vehicles across the region**, to help support automated shuttles between Birmingham International & Birmingham Business Park.
- **Developed the largest testbed operations in the UK for autonomous vehicles** across Birmingham, Solihull and Coventry.
- **Commissioned a new Transport for West Midlands app to book and pay for all local transport options in one place**, including bus, train, tram, e-Scooters, cycling hire, taxis, Demand Responsive Transport, car rental, car club, parking.
- **Promoted the uses of 5G technologies in transport** including the UK's first 5G connected tram, controlling autonomous buses, and connecting traffic lights and sensors using 5G to reduce congestion.
- **Supported the UK's first aerial logistics trials across the West Midlands**, such as Skyfarer's trials to deliver medical supplies by drone and to ease pressures on the NHS.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Capitalise on Birmingham being selected to host the 2027 Intelligent Transport Systems World Congress**, to showcase our world-renowned achievements within innovative transport and to help to attract further investment into our region.
- **Continue to champion the West Midlands as the home of autonomous vehicles in the UK**, working to attract leading car and technology companies to the region to test their new products and services.
- **Implement the full capping of fares across all operators and all modes of transport**, so that total fares will still be capped at a daily or weekly maximum.
- **Launch the new Transport for West Midlands app to allow people to book and pay for all local transport options in one place**, using the latest technology to ensure the app is as efficient and accessible as possible.
- **Bring in the most exciting entrepreneurs to help deliver our transport goals**, for example through the Transport for West Midlands Mass Transit Accelerator.
- **Make transport innovation a priority for our WMCA Innovation Board and any future devolution of R&D funding** from Government, and continue to make the case **for the WMCA to be given regulatory sandbox status** for new transport technologies.

MAKING VERY LIGHT RAIL A REALITY

Very Light Rail is an exciting new technology, where the West Midlands is leading the way. This innovative approach with lightweight vehicles and battery technology, making it much cheaper in both construction and operation than traditional Metro systems.

Not only does this have the potential to improve the public transport network in Coventry, but it also presents **the opportunity to create thousands of new jobs in research and manufacturing.** It's a compelling prospect for the West Midlands, and we must seize our chance to become a world-leader in this field.

Progress made:

- **Agreed a further £36.8 million for the Very Light Rail Programme,** taking the total investment to £72 million, **funding the completion of the prototype Very Light Rail vehicle, the first tests at the new Dudley Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre test track** between Castle Hill Bridge and Cinder Bank, and **the future demonstrator track in Coventry from Coventry rail station to the city centre..**
- Agreed with Coventry City Council that the **next route should connect the City Centre with University Hospital,** before potentially connecting to Ansty Park.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Open the demonstrator track from Coventry rail station to the city centre,** and support the testing and passenger services on this new line, including offering to integrate ticketing into Transport for West Midlands Swift card and app.
- **Develop the full business case and win the funding from Government to build the full line** from University Hospital to the City Centre.
- When the demonstrator is operational, look for opportunities to bring in new investors and potential customers for the Very Light Rail system.



Seeing the latest Very Light Rail prototype vehicle which was funded by the Combined Authority

MAKING BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT A WORLD-CLASS PASSENGER AIRPORT

Our region's airport is a vital connection to destinations all around the world, letting people in the West Midlands do business, go on holiday and travel to see family. It has been a difficult few years for the airport with the COVID pandemic causing severe operational and financial challenges. But passenger numbers have rebounded well, and more people are choosing to fly from Birmingham rather than going elsewhere for their travel. **As Mayor, I will champion Birmingham Airport and seek to make it a world-class experience we can all be proud of.**

Progress made:

- **Championed the airport as it has seen passenger numbers recover to 2019 levels,** which has seen the return of A380 Emirates flights to Dubai and Qatar Airways flights.
- **Supported the airport in promoting the region and securing new flights including,** 15 new Easyjet routes, Saudia launching new flights, new Ryanair flights and a TUI flight to Singapore.
- **Improved existing transport links to and around the airport,** such as the improved Junction 6 on the M42, and trialling fully electric autonomous vehicles at BHX, and **oversaw the design and commenced procurement of the Automated People Mover** which will connect the HS2 Interchange station, the NEC and Birmingham Airport.
- **Supported Birmingham Airport masterplan, with improved facilities such as new expanded queuing areas and security hall,** to reduce queuing times and improve the experience of passengers through the airport.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Support the Birmingham Airport team in securing new routes,** for example to growth markets such as the US, Canada and India.
- **Push forward the delivery of the new HS2 station, the surrounding infrastructure, the Arden Cross development and the Automated People Mover** to connect to the airport.
- **Continue developing our plans to continue the Metro through East Birmingham to the airport,** enhancing bus services for those who work at the airport, and explore whether the new HS2 cycle route from Birmingham to Coventry could connect with the airport.
- **Support Birmingham airport in achieving their target of being net zero by 2033.**
- **Continue to strongly oppose a second runway at Birmingham Airport,** and monitor the CAA's new airspace change process to prevent additional noise pollution for local residents.

INFRASTRUCTURE ACCELERATION PLAN: SPEEDING UP THE DELIVERY OF TRANSPORT PROJECTS

My ambitious 2040 transport plan for the region requires a step-change in the pace and scale of transport projects. We have increased our transport funding **from £38 million per year in 2016/17 to an average of £407 million in the next few years.** I learnt in my time at John Lewis, adapting to the surge in online shopping, that you need to move quickly and change how your business does things to thrive. **We must adapt in the West Midlands to deliver the scale of our ambition.**

We have seen examples in the region such as the Commonwealth Games and the COVID era active travel schemes, where delivery has been swift and schemes which would have taken years, took weeks and months. But we have also seen other schemes which have been delayed. Therefore **we must take our next set of infrastructure projects forward with even greater rigour, and a focus on keeping costs down and delivering on time.**

	Challenge	Progress (2017-24)	Plans (2024-28)
1	Funding for transport projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased the transport capital budget by over ten times from £38 million (2016/17) to an average of £407 million in the next few years. by preparing our schemes and making the case effectively to Government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attract more capital funding from Government, spend current funds such as the CRSTS effectively, and secure the new Single Settlement at the next spending review. Explore new ways of financing infrastructure schemes, such as land value capture. Explore changes to accounting rules, for example whether MRP is the appropriate way to handle project risk, and whether scheme development costs can be capitalised at an early stage.
2	Planning processes and multiple sign-offs required by civil servants and Ministers in London	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured agreement for individual schemes by successfully making the case to civil servants and Ministers in London. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore whether there is the potential to create “Regionally Significant Infrastructure Schemes” which could go through a fast-track planning process (similar to the NSIPs process / DCOs). Explore whether where there are major schemes, or multiple schemes in Local Authorities, the Combined Authority could fund dedicated officer capacity to expedite them. Seek the devolution of the powers to approve transport projects within the boundary of the West Midlands, for example the power to grant Transport & Works Act Orders on behalf of (or instead of) the Secretary of State), and the ability to alter CRSTS without having to seek permission from London.. Commission an expert review (“Land Commission 2”) into the housing & regeneration progress and powers of the WMCA and the West Midlands Mayor, including examining the powers require to speed up projects.
3	Sign-offs required within the region for transport projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplified the Single Assurance Framework within the Combined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree a common regional pipeline of transport infrastructure, which is agreed and reviewed at regular intervals.

		<p>Authority, meaning less time spent on different report-writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEPs have now been wound up, removing some duplicative funding processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on this pipeline, prepare business case and technical work so that it is ready for when new funding appears from Government – so the West Midlands can take advantage. • Foster more mutual recognition of technical documentation (such as business cases) between public bodies (e.g. DfT, councils and the Combined Authority), so documents don't have to be redrafted for different approval or funding organisations.
4	<p>Public sector procurement rules mean time taken to secure the right people to work on projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed stronger in-house programme management office and delivery function within the West Midlands Combined Authority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the Delivery Directorate within Transport for West Midlands. • Hire more technical professionals in-house, for example consider appointing a Chief Engineer to the West Midlands Combined Authority, given the West Midlands Combined Authority now has a substantial capital programme. • Create additional panel / framework procurement routes for engineering, professional services and construction work, so that external expertise to be brought in quickly when needed.
5	<p>Delays caused by dependencies on other public bodies (e.g. Network Rail, HS2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established partnerships with other public bodies (e.g. the West Midlands Grand Rail Collaboration), and personal relationships with the key individuals involved to resolve issues. • Found creative workarounds, for example, beginning the Metro work in Digbeth high street and extension to the Clayton Hotel now, so the overall scheme can be completed sooner when HS2 is finished. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue structured engagement with other public bodies, including Network Rail, HS2, National Highways and Active Travel England. • Use personal network and relationships with leaders of these organisations to speed through West Midlands projects.





6	<p>Length of time taken to acquire properties needed to build projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hired team of property and regeneration professionals within the Combined Authority. • Secured flexible funds which can be used for property acquisition where necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek strengthened compulsory purchase powers, which can be exercised by the Combined Authority in its own right – in particular to strengthen negotiations with landowners. • Bolster expert property and legal capacity in-house to use these new powers, and consider offering this additional capacity to councils for priority schemes. • Acquire strategic property in advance of schemes being fully developed and funded (e.g. buy the land for new stations if it comes up on the market).
7	<p>Consistency in construction and teams</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made clear which individual the Mayor held responsible for the timely, on-budget delivery of each project. • Supported the work of the Midland Metro Alliance – to realise scale benefits of building multiple lines (Dudley, Digbeth) at once, and to generate a predictable pipeline of future work. • Improved external scrutiny, by reforming the Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruct Midlands Metro Alliance to take a standardised modular approach to design and construction where possible, to save costs. • Explore more performance pay, in particular whether public employees could be given a share of the financial upside if projects are delivered on-time and on-budget. • Develop ways to incentives for senior leaders to stay in post to see projects through, for example through ‘vesting’ style compensation models.
8	<p>Technical challenges, for example unexpected utilities diversions, historic mining activity, wildlife</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackled unknown technical challenges on a case-by-case basis, often losing time as a result. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore whether the National Underground Asset Register, and work Energy Capital and WM5G have done on infrastructure networks could be used to reduce the difficulty of utilities diversions in future schemes.







On site at the Port Loop housing development in Birmingham

BUILD THE HOMES WE NEED WHILST PROTECTING THE GREEN BELT

PROMISES KEPT: 2021-2024

Commitments	Action	Kept
"Protect our precious Green Belt"	Secured more than £650 million from the Government to clean up brownfield sites to reduce the pressure on the region's green belt, and championed local campaigns for the protection of green spaces in the region.	
"Clean up more derelict sites and build on Brownfield First"	Deployed hundreds of millions of pounds of funding from Government to clean up brownfield sites across the West Midlands, creating more than 12,000 jobs, nearly 3.5 million square feet of commercial floor space and over 8,000 new homes.	
"Build more homes more quickly"	On track to hit our target of building 215,000 new homes across the region by 2031, the only region in the UK to be on track, including beating our target of 15,250 new homes every year in the three years 2021-2024.	
"Ensure our heritage is protected"	Committed funding to regenerate historic buildings and championed local pubs and community buildings, including leading the campaign for the rebuilding of the Crooked House Pub.	

KEY COMMITMENTS: 2024-2028

Keep building homes faster than our targets	Continue to achieve the best house building figures in the UK against targets by building more than our target of 15,257 new homes every year, so even more local people can buy or rent their own home.	
Continue our successful Brownfield First approach	Double down on our Brownfield First approach, cleaning up derelict industrial sites to deliver the homes we need whilst protecting our green spaces.	
Drive a social housing revolution	Use our £400 million war chest to start a social housing revolution to help those on low incomes, support the regeneration of council estates, ensure developers provide truly affordable housing, and extend our successful Housing First scheme to prevent homelessness.	
Get the planning system working more smoothly	Work with local councils to bolster their planning departments to ensure key developments get off the ground quickly.	

FIGHT FOR OUR GREEN BELT AND OUR GREEN SPACES

There are few issues which arouse more concern from local residents than inappropriate development on green spaces near their homes. **As Mayor I have fought successfully to protect our Green Belt and green spaces across the West Midlands.**

My approach to this work has been to understand the detail behind the locations and the proposals, to work with local campaigners and groups such as the CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England), and then to **make the case against inappropriate development at all levels, from local councils right up to Government Ministers.**

This approach has been working, and we have made the most progress with brownfield regeneration in decades. But it could all be thrown away if your local leaders are not capable and not committed to protecting our landscapes, and developers are given free rein. And once green spaces are lost, it is almost impossible to get them back. In the next four years, **I pledge to continue our fight for the Green Belt and our green spaces.**

Progress made:

- **Secured a total of more than £650 million from the Government to clean brownfield sites** for new homes and business, to reduce the pressure on the region's green belt.
- **Funded new developments on these brownfield sites**, such as Abbots Lane in Coventry, SPARK / Phoenix 10 in Walsall, Midland Met Learning campus in Sandwell, Bilston Urban Village in Wolverhampton, and Icknield Port Loop in Birmingham, and **blocked the use of any West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) funding for unacceptable green belt development.**
- **Championed local campaigns for the protection of green spaces in the region**, such as Corbett Meadow in Stourbridge, the Straits and Majors Fold in Gornal, Barrows Lane fields in Yardley, and the Coundon Wedge in Coventry.
- **Won the case with the Government to review the National Planning Policy Framework** and legislate in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act to provide additional protections for the green belt.
- **Commissioned the Black Country Brownfield Land Report in 2021**, which examined every possible alternative to Green Belt development in the Black Country, including fitting more homes on brownfield sites, and increasing the density of our town centres.
- **Funded projects to improve green spaces across the West Midlands** and make them accessible for leisure, such as the Community Green Grants and planting around 600,000 trees as part of the West Midlands Virtual Forest.
- Ensured that where Green Belt sites have been allocated for development (for example at Arden Cross), work is being done with the local council, landowners and developers to **ensure that the infrastructure and public services are sufficient for both current and future residents.**



At Linthouse Lane in Wolverhampton with local MP Jane Stevenson

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Stick with our brownfield first approach**, prioritising regeneration of existing sites rather than permitting green belt development.
- Work with local authorities as they review their Local Plans, and **encourage them to remove proposed green belt sites from development plans where possible and to focus on brownfield development**, following the updated National Planning Policy Framework.
- **Champion local people in their campaigns to protect green spaces** in the West Midlands from inappropriate development, such as Wilderness Lane in Great Barr and Walsall Arboretum, lobbying councils and the Government as appropriate.
- Make the most of the Government's new biodiversity net gain requirements to **improve green spaces for residents and nature in the West Midlands**, for example by helping to develop viable West Midlands off-site projects for developers to invest in.
- **Commission an expert review ("Land Commission 2") into the housing & regeneration activities and powers** of the WMCA and the West Midlands Mayor, including examining strategic planning powers and the power to 'call-in' decisions including Green Belt release.
- **Explore the use of Mayoral Development Corporations** to accelerate brownfield development and relieve pressure on the Green Belt.



Campaigning to save green spaces with James Morris, MP for Halesowen and Rowley Regis

BROWNFIELD FIRST: STICK WITH OUR PLAN THAT IS TRANSFORMING THE REGION

Our industrial past means that we are the brownfield capital of Britain, if not the world. We have many vacant sites across the region, which cannot be turned into new housing or business developments without significant investment in cleaning them up first. The public sector can step in and unblock progress, using new funding secured from the Government, and that's exactly what we have been doing at the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Local places which have been stark reminders of our industrial decline have been brought back to life and are now sources of local pride. But there is more to do. The easy sites have been done, and now we need more expertise, more funding and a renewed commitment to tackle the rest. SPARK / Phoenix 10 in Walsall, Abbots Lane in Coventry and Great Charles Street in Birmingham tell the story of the benefits these sites can bring for local people: new homes, new jobs, and new opportunities. **Now is the time to double down on our brownfield first approach, not abandon it just as it is beginning to produce results.**

Progress made:

- **Deployed hundreds of millions of pounds of funding from Government to clean up brownfield sites** across the West Midlands, creating more than 12,000 jobs, nearly 3.5 million square feet of commercial floor space and over 8,000 new homes.
- **Secured an additional £100 million of brownfield land funding** as part of the Deeper Devolution Deal, which will go into a new £200 million Brownfield Housing Fund, to deliver another 12,000 homes in the West Midlands.
- **Funded new homes or business premises on a hitlist of local brownfield sites** such as:
 - Icknield Port Loop, Longbridge and Stone Yard in Birmingham
 - Abbots Lane, Holbrook Lane and Wood End in Coventry
 - Portersfield and the former Cookley Works in Dudley
 - Friar Park and Fountain Lane in Sandwell
 - Simon Digby College and Kingshurst in Solihull
 - Caparo and Harvestime in Walsall
 - The Marches and Cable Street in Wolverhampton
- **Secured Government agreement to the West Midlands Investment Zone which provides tax incentives for new businesses to move into these areas**, at the Autumn Budget in November 2023.
- **Made substantial progress in delivering new transport infrastructure which unlocks brownfield housing and business sites**, such as the Metro extension to Dudley and Brierley Hill and new stations and Willenhall and Darlaston.
- **Kept our pipeline of new potential sites up to date** so that we can continue to deliver as new private or Government investment becomes available.
- **Supported local projects which have needed to alter their plans because of changes in the property market** (for example commuting patterns after COVID-19, or reduction in retail footfall), such as at Coventry City Centre South and Portersfield in Dudley.
- **Funded and opened the £17.5 million National Brownfield Institute in Wolverhampton**, to research new technologies and train local people to remediate brownfield sites.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Make the most of the West Midlands Investment Zone sites**, and the tax incentives for new employers in these areas, to encourage new investment and the redevelopment of these areas:
 - **Coventry-Warwick Gigapark**: anchored by a new battery gigafactory and associated businesses and technologies.
 - **Birmingham Knowledge Quarter**: running from close to the HS2 station, northeast from Aston University through Duddeston and Nechells to Aston.
 - **Wolverhampton Green Innovation Corridor**: from the city centre to the north, fostering new green industries and skills.
- **Secure agreement to use Mayoral Development Corporations and Compulsory Purchase Orders** to accelerate brownfield development and relieve pressure on the Green Belt, as part of the scope of the “Land Commission 2” expert review.
- **Proactively acquire sites, including from other parts of the public sector where there is the opportunity to develop them.**
- **Take a more assertive approach to site assembly, including compulsory purchase where necessary**, in order to make development happen on difficult sites.
- **Expand the WMCA’s funds, such as the Collective Investment Fund so that we can reinvest proceeds of existing schemes in new projects, and secure further cash from the Government to continue the programme of brownfield development.**
- **Continue to lobby for tax changes to make cleaning up brownfield sites more cost effective**, for example a review of the Contaminated Land Remediation Tax Relief.



Brownfield remediation at the SPARK development in Walsall with Councillor Adrian Andrews

SUCCESS STORIES: MAKING THE WEST MIDLANDS THE BROWNFIELD CAPITAL OF THE UK

Three example regeneration projects from across the West Midlands showcase the determined, detailed work that the Combined Authority's team have done in partnership with local authorities and developers. Each of these sites is providing new housing or business space, but they are also providing additional benefits to the region, such as construction work for local firms, new green spaces for the public and training opportunities for youngsters.

These projects prove that, with the right political leadership and commitment, even sites which have lain derelict for decades can be brought back to life.

MAJOR BROWNFIELD CLEAN UP AT SPARK / PHOENIX 10, WALSALL

- **Background:** This large 44-acre brownfield site, near to Junction 10 of the M6, was previously home of the James Bridge Copper Works, was heavily contaminated and had lain unused for two decades.
- **What was done:** The WMCA provided millions of pounds of funding through the Land and Property Investment Fund to kick-start the regeneration. Planning permissions were granted by Walsall Council for the new development in 2023, and remediation work has begun, with 1.3 million tonnes of soil excavated and treated so far on the site, and 150,000 tonnes of concrete have been crushed and processed.
- **Results:** New buildings will be on the site this year (2024), and completion is expected in 2027/2028. SPARK will create more than 1,000 local jobs, 620,000 square feet of well-connected new business space for manufacturing and logistics.

BRINGING NATURE INTO THE CITY AT ABBOTTS LANE, COVENTRY

- **Background:** A derelict former National Grid depot and operations centre on Abbots Lane near the city centre in Coventry, which had been vacant since 2012. One of the few large brownfield sites in Coventry, where there is significant pressure on the Green Belt.
- **What was done:** In 2020, the WMCA provided millions of pounds of funding to unlock the site, and additional funding in 2021 to provide a new 'linear' urban park for local residents as part of the development. In 2023, a planning inspector confirmed that the scheme could go ahead, despite City Council opposition.
- **Results:** Construction starting on site this year (2024), with 690 new homes being built in all, and a new publicly available park with over 1,000 trees.

TRAINING YOUNG PEOPLE IN CONSTRUCTION AT THE BOMB SITE, GREAT CHARLES STREET, BIRMINGHAM

- **Background:** Known as the Bomb Site, just next to Great Charles Street Queensway in Birmingham City Centre, this site was used as a pay and display car park for many years, and had not been developed since the Second World War.
- **What was done:** secured the largest Build to Rent investment outside London. The WMCA provided £100,000 to fund Construction Gateway for skills training on the project with developer MODA, and construction firms John Sisk & Son and McAuliffe, building on the successful training hub at the Mercian tower on Broad Street.
- **Results:** Ground broken on the site in April 2023, 722 homes being built for rent, and further 106 jobs created in the construction of the 37-storey development.



The new Nauls Mill Linear Park in Coventry

KEEP UP THE PACE OF RAPID HOUSEBUILDING IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

The pace of construction has continued to be strong in the West Midlands, despite COVID-19, construction costs increasing and the increase in interest rates. As a region we are often given as an example of rapid housebuilding, and we are on track to hit our target of building 215,000 new homes across the region by 2031.

Yet there is still more to be done. The process of securing planning permission, building the homes and handing them over still takes too long. There is no one thing which will solve these problems, but focused energetic work on the detailed local issues in the West Midlands is what will unlock more homes more quickly here. **We have shown in the last few years that it is possible to move faster – we need to keep that improvement up.**

Progress made:

- **On track to hit our target of building 215,000 new homes across the region by 2031**, the only region in the UK to be on track, including beating our target of 15,257 new homes every year in the three years 2021-2024.
- **Signed investment partnerships with key investors to bring billions of pounds of new investment in housing and business projects in the West Midlands**, such as pension fund L&G (£4 billion) and logistics and warehousing developer Segro (£2 billion).
- **Attracted hundreds of millions of pounds of private investment in property development in the West Midlands**, through the work of the West Midlands Growth Company using the West Midlands Investment Prospectus of major schemes across the West Midlands.
- **Trained thousands of young people through our construction training hubs**, for example at the Great Charles Street site in Birmingham.
- **Agreed a unique land reform partnership with the Government**, which gives the WMCA influence over how public sector sites are disposed of in the region – so that they can be unlocked for new homes for local residents.
- **Built a team of housing and land experts within the Combined Authority** who work to accelerate the construction of new housing and business premises in the region.
- **Commissioned an expert report ('Homes for the Future') to develop a regional strategy for zero carbon homes and advanced manufacturing.**

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Maintain our housebuilding momentum** and review the goal of 215,000 new homes by 2031 to see if we can be even more ambitious.
- **Encourage local authorities in the West Midlands to participate actively in DLUHC's Digital Planning programme**, using digital technology to speed up plan-making and development.
- **Support local authority planning departments where possible using WMCA resources and staff**, to speed up the development process in the region, and champion the case for Government to permit the ringfencing of income for council planning departments.
- **Commission an expert review ("Land Commission 2") into the housing & regeneration progress and powers** of the WMCA and the West Midlands Mayor, including examining whether the

Combined Authority should have independent Compulsory Purchase powers to speed up developments.

- **Commission further work to develop new funding mechanisms to deliver new housebuilding and regeneration projects**, such as land value capture.

A NEW 'TRANSPORT FOCUSED' HOUSING PROGRAMME

Our 2040 Transport Plan is investing billions in new Metro, rail and rapid bus connections across the region, and the stations and stops on these routes make ideal places for new housing development. Not only are these great places to build new homes, they are also likely to support the financial sustainability of the transport services in the long-term.

If re-elected, I will set up a new programme of activity looking at 'transport-focused' housing, including:

- **Proactively examine the parcels of land next to train stations, Metro and bus stations** to see what opportunities there are for development.
- **Use WMCA funds to encourage developers building near to transport hubs to increase the density** of their schemes where appropriate.
- **Seek opportunities to compulsorily purchase land** where this would help with site assembly or speed up development.
- **Learn lessons from London and other cities around the world**, who have successfully built around their transport links, for example the developments above Elizabeth Line stations in London.
- Explore the extent to which **new developments around future transport infrastructure could be used to fund that transport infrastructure** in the first place.

CASE STUDIES: NEW GARDEN SQUARE AND PORTERSFIELD

- **New Garden Square in Birmingham** is a brilliant example of the extension of the Metro to Five Ways where MODA Living are developing a new 1,600 home community with 400 homes already under construction, and new shops, offices, cafes and restaurants. The quick connection by Metro to Birmingham City Centre and beyond has made this an attractive location for city living.
- **Portersfield in Dudley** is the development on the former Cavendish House site, which will be brought to life by the new Metro extension to Dudley which will open later this year. The tram connection will provide the impetus for new investment in housing and regeneration of this site and the wider town centre.

PROVIDE MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR EVERYONE IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

For us to make new homes affordable for everyone, we need to make sure that we go beyond simply building more homes. That's why we have been proactive in ensuring that a good share of the homes that are being built are truly affordable for local residents, and that in the rented sector, standards are high and Government support is at the right level to prevent people ending up in difficulty.

Affordability is a huge challenge, particularly for young people in the region, **and I will continue to do everything I can to make high-quality housing more affordable for everyone.**

Progress made:

- **Exceeded our target to deliver a minimum of 20% affordable homes in schemes funded by the WMCA** – currently at 33% of homes funded being affordable. As part of this we have enforced our more accurate definition of 'affordable', so it is based on people's incomes.
- **Funded new homes of all types, including housing estate redevelopments such as Kingshurst in Solihull**, rather than focusing solely on city-centre apartments.
- **Supported more than 520 people through our Housing First scheme** for rough sleepers or those at risk of homelessness, and secured Government funding for that to continue.
- **Secured a commitment of up to £400 million of the Affordable Homes Programme** in the region with Homes England by 2026, with greater devolution of this funding after 2026.
- **Secured £15 million of funding from the Government to fund improvement works** and tackle hazards relating to damp, mould and condensation in existing affordable housing stock.
- **Campaigned for more local powers to clamp down on unsuitable exempt accommodation**, supporting Crisis' Regulate the Rogues campaign and Bob Blackman MP's Private Members Bill.
- **Campaigned successfully for an increase in the level of Local Housing Allowance benefits at the 2023 Autumn Budget**, to help people at risk of homelessness and being driven into council-provided temporary accommodation.
- **Supported local groups, in particular BrumLAG and UK CAG, in pressuring the Government to resolve the outstanding building safety issues.**
- **Supported the retrofitting of homes in the West Midlands for energy efficiency** through the Sustainable Warmth Competition and the Net Zero Neighbourhood programme.
- **Provided £9 million to social enterprise Cornerstone**, to acquire more properties to help families and others in desperate need of accommodation.



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STEELWORKS ROAD

Meeting a resident in a new house on the Combined Authority-funded Caparo site in Walsall

TRIPLE SOCIAL HOUSING DELIVERY IN THE WEST MIDLANDS: A NEW PRIORITY FOR THE COMBINED AUTHORITY

While we have made excellent progress on house building, and ensuring that the developments we fund include large numbers of affordable housing units, **but like other places, not enough new social housing has been built**. This means that many people who need stable and secure housing, are on housing waiting lists across the region and often stuck in temporary or unsuitable accommodation.

Until now, we hadn't had funding which we could use to tackle this challenge, but as part of the Deeper Devolution Deal agreed last year, **the Government committed to giving the West Midlands Combined Authority control of the Affordable Homes Programme**. This is going to be worth up to £400 million until 2026, and billions more in the years afterwards, and it is the first time a deal like this has been agreed outside London.

We have an opportunity like never before to use this funding to spark a social housing revolution in two areas in particular:

FUNDING HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS TO BUILD SOCIAL HOUSING

- **Use the new funding from the Affordable Homes Programme to triple the pace of social housebuilding in the region** from the current rate of 500-700 new homes per year started by Housing Associations in the Metropolitan WMCA area, to roughly 1,700 per year by 2028.

ESTATE REGENERATION

- Partner with developers, local authorities and housing associations to **regenerate estates, providing better quality housing for existing residents, and increasing the number of homes available**.
- Identify **estate regeneration plans where this approach and Affordable Homes Programme funding could be applied**, such as the Ladywood regeneration in central Birmingham, Spon End in Coventry, Brockmoor in Dudley (building on the Net Zero Neighbourhood programme), Druids Heath in Birmingham, and Heath Town in Wolverhampton (for example the land around Heath Town Baths).

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Maximise the Government investment of up to £400 million through the Affordable Homes Programme** in the region by 2026, and work with Housing Associations to substantially accelerate the rate of social housebuilding.
- **Secure full local devolution of Government Affordable Homes Programme after 2026**, to allow the WMCA to fund the development of new social housing schemes in the region.
- **Maintain the delivery of our minimum 20% affordable target** for WMCA-funded developments, directly funding new affordable homes for local residents.
- **Develop an ambitious programme of estate regeneration across the region**, alongside local authorities and housing associations, improving homes, retrofitting with energy efficiency measures and increasing housing numbers across the region.

- **Continue the successful Housing First scheme to help those at risk of homelessness**, and secure additional funding from Government for Housing First and potentially for additional follow-on support.
- Build on the innovative Help to Own model, to **develop new innovative funding and ownership models as part of the Affordable Homes Programme** to give people the opportunity to buy their own homes at an affordable price.
- Explore whether the WMCA could **support the development of new high-quality local providers of temporary accommodation and supported accommodation** in the region, potentially by partnering with an institutional investor such as L&G or Aviva.

PROTECT OUR HERITAGE AND MAKE THE REGION PROUD

West Midlanders are rightly very proud of their history, and our buildings symbolise that history. Sadly, not everyone shares our pride. The Crooked House Pub burnt down and was demolished in 2023, illustrating the disregard that some have for our history – and I was adamant that this could not be allowed to pass. I will continue to press for the perpetrators to be brought to justice, and the pub to be rebuilt brick by brick.

The Crooked House is the most visible example of a much wider point: **our heritage is vitally important.** It makes the West Midlands great and it must be celebrated and protected. As Mayor, I will do everything I can to **respect our heritage and pass it on to future generations.**

Progress made:

- **Committed funding to regenerate historic buildings** such as Globe House in Walsall, the Walsall Guildhall, Erdington Baths and the Town Hall in the Royal Town of Sutton Coldfield.
- **Led the campaign for the rebuilding of the Crooked House Pub** in Himley and **supported efforts to retain local venues such as winning the campaign to list the Crown** in Birmingham, and nominated five other pubs in the region for listed status: The Mitre, The Duke William and The Queens Head in Stourbridge, Pretty Bricks in Walsall, and Ye Old Leathern Bottel in Wednesbury.
- **Championed local pubs and community buildings**, including leading the campaign for the rebuilding of the Crooked House Pub.
- **Provided funding for the expansion of the Black Country Living Museum**, including the Forging Ahead project showing the West Midlands in the 1940s, 50 and 60s.
- **Funded the development of new plans to save a number of important West Midlands buildings:** 16th-century pub The Golden Lion in Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham, Matthew Boulton's and James Watts' Soho Foundry in Smethwick, Walsall Imperial theatre and cinema, The Old Print Works in Balsall Heath, Birmingham.
- **Set up the WMCA Heritage Board and partnered with the Architectural Heritage Fund** to ensure our historic buildings are protected, and dedicated £8 million to culture and heritage from the Commonwealth Games underspend and capital funding secured as part of the Deeper Devolution Deal.
- **Secured the Commonwealth Games in the West Midlands, which celebrated our West Midlands heritage in its opening ceremony**, and secured the future of Ozzy the Bull at Birmingham New Street Station.








The Crooked House pub before it burned down and was demolished

Plan for 2024-2028:




- **Continue to lead the campaign for the Crooked House Pub to be rebuilt brick by brick**, and to press for the perpetrators to be brought to justice, and **support our historic pubs through our 'List Your Local' campaign** with the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA).
- **Broker a new plan for the Crown, Electric Cinema and Station Street in Birmingham**, to retain our heritage and the cultural uses of the buildings.
- **Continue our work with partners such as the National Trust, Historic England and the Architectural Heritage Trust** to protect the region's buildings.
- **Continue to support and fund where possible improvements to regional heritage sites**, such as the Chance Brothers Glassworks in Smethwick and the heritage greenhouses at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.
- **Commission an expert review ("Land Commission 2") into the housing & regeneration progress and powers** of the WMCA and the West Midlands Mayor, including examining whether the Combined Authority should have independent Compulsory Purchase powers, to **allow priority projects such as the Harborne Royalty to take place even where the local council does not have the resources to do so**.
- **Ensure that any plans for major new public infrastructure in the region respect the heritage buildings in the area**, for example at Moor Street station as part of the Midlands Rail Hub and at Curzon Street station as part of HS2, and use existing infrastructure creatively, for example by **beginning the construction of the Digbeth Viaduct Highline park and walkway**.
- **Use new transport links to improve access and open up heritage assets to more visitors**, for example around the Black Country Living Museum, and Dudley Castle and Zoo.
- **Explore whether the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and its collections could be supported sustainably with national funding**, potentially by becoming a National Museum.
- **Work with the Canal and River Trust to improve the West Midlands canal network and open it up to more people**, including restoring the Bradley Arm canal to link Wolverhampton, Walsall and Birmingham, further work on the Lapal Canal in Selly Oak, exploring improvements to the Smethwick to Birmingham corridor including Icknield Port Loop, the Cape Arm around the new Midland Met Hospital, and Fens Pool in Dudley.
- **Work with the family to explore the possibility of a new permanent memorial for Birmingham musician, poet and actor Benjamin Zephaniah**.
- **Celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Royal Charter for Sutton Coldfield in 2028**, and the founding of Bishop Vesey's Grammar School in 2027.
- **Offer support and expertise to local groups who are seeking to restore or protect historic buildings**, either through Local Heritage Trusts or community ownership, following the successful example of the Historic Coventry Trust.

REVIVING LOCAL CENTRES IN EVERY BOROUGH

PROMISES KEPT: 2021-2024

Commitments	Action	Kept
“Campaign for more funding from Government”	Over £1 billion war chest of new funding now available for improvements to local centres and high streets across the region.	
“Focus on local high streets in areas...that don’t normally get investment”	Majority of new Government funding has been for local centres in the Black Country , such as Dudley, Brierley Hill, Walsall, Bloxwich, Aldridge, Tipton, Wednesbury, Rowley Regis and Bilston.	
“Champion the masterplans for areas such as Solihull and Sutton Coldfield”	Substantial progress made in Solihull, Sutton Coldfield and other local areas agreeing their plans , and securing funding for their delivery.	
“Focus on high-quality public transport, safe cycling and walking options”	Made substantial progress in delivering new transport to connect local centres, such as the Metro extensions to Dudley, Brierley Hill, Digbeth and Edgbaston Village, the new stations at Darlaston, Willenhall, Kings Heath, Moseley and Pineapple Road, and a new bus station in Dudley.	
“Bringing in new cash to regenerate town centres...through partnerships with private investors”	Led inward investment efforts to attract new retailers to the region, such as Harvey Norman in Merry Hill and Sutton Coldfield, and developed partnerships with major investors like the £4 billion commitment from pension fund L&G to invest in the region.	

KEY COMMITMENTS: 2024-2028

Deploy the £1 billion of funding effectively so we see real change	Spend the cash effectively so it actually makes our high streets and town centres visibly more appealing, more sustainable for local businesses, and better all-round for local people, and appoint a dedicated Black Country Regeneration Commissioner to work with local councils on speeding up and delivering their plans.	
Support local authorities using WMCA resources and staff	Provide funding, expertise and staff to help councils speed up the development process in the region, and champion the case for Government to permit the ringfencing of income for council planning departments.	
Continue to improve transport connections to local centres	Expanding our Metro plans to include Halesowen, Walsall and Chelmsley Wood , opening the new stations at Darlaston,	

Willenhall, Kings Heath, Moseley and Pineapple Road, and the new bus station in Dudley.

Increase the density of housing in town centres

Provide Combined Authority housing funds to increase the number of homes in town centres, so that we bring in more footfall to local shops and businesses, at the same time as protecting the Green Belt from new homes.



Attract new business investment in local centres

Attract new business investment in local centres, working with the West Midlands Growth Company to bring in new occupiers and investors.



At Market Place in Dudley town centre next to the Duncan Edwards statue

SUPPORTING LOCAL CENTRES IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

For too long, we simply didn't have the financial resources to tackle the decline of our local high streets and town centres. The great success of the last few years has been making the case to Government that we badly need new investment, and **we have been successful in securing over £1 billion of new funding for our local centres in the West Midlands.**

Now we can move with confidence to commit to returning our local areas to a high standard, and restoring the pride of local people. It's not been easy for local businesses over the last few years, but there are new opportunities: remote working has increased, meaning people spending some days of the week at home or in local centres, rather than commuting into the region's cities, new transport links mean places like Dudley will become far better connected.

If I'm re-elected as Mayor, I will bring all of my experience as a retailer at John Lewis to addressing the challenges our local areas are facing - with a **particular focus on the most challenging areas, including smaller high streets, villages and town centres.**

Progress made:

- **Won over £1 billion of new Government funding** for local centres and high streets, supporting local authorities with their bids, and securing additional investment through the Combined Authority, including from:
 - **Government:** Future High Streets Fund, Towns Fund, Levelling Up Fund.
 - **WMCA:** Land Fund, Brownfield Housing Fund, Single Regeneration Fund, Transport for West Midlands capital programme, Residential Investment Fund, Commercial Investment Fund.
- **Made substantial progress in delivering new transport to connect local centres**, such as the Metro extensions to Dudley, Brierley Hill, Digbeth and Edgbaston Village, the new stations at Darlaston, Willenhall, Kings Heath, Moseley and Pineapple Road, and a new bus station in Dudley.
- **Kept fares low on bus and Metro and protected free travel passes for older people** to make sure people can afford to get into their local centre.
- **Committed funding to regenerate historic buildings** such as Globe House in Walsall, the Walsall Guildhall, Erdington Baths and the Town Hall in the Royal Town of Sutton Coldfield.
- **Campaigned against the programme of police station closures in local centres across the region**, and made the case to take on Police & Crime Commissioner powers and bring back local police to local centres.
- **Led inward investment efforts to attract new retailers to the region**, such as Harvey Norman in Merry Hill and Sutton Coldfield.
- **Continued to bring in private sector expertise to advise the Combined Authority** on regeneration and how we attract new businesses into the region through the Town Centres Taskforce.
- **Helped local councils on housing and regeneration projects where necessary** by providing expertise, funding and capacity to get things moving more quickly.
- **Supported the major regeneration plans for local centres such as Mell Square in Solihull, Ravenscourt in Brownhills, and Sutton Coldfield town centre**, including securing new investors in the Gracechurch Centre.
- **Upped our financial commitment to the City Centre South regeneration in Coventry to £113 million**, the largest single investment the Combined Authority has made in a regeneration project.
- **Secured Growth Zones bringing more investment funding for local centres** from our retained business rates, for example in Brierley Hill.
- **Campaigned for reform of business rates to support local retailers**, and **lobbied strongly for business rate exemptions** to support small shops and local businesses.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Deploy the £1 billion of funding effectively so we see real change** in our high streets and local centres.
- **Appoint a dedicated Black Country Regeneration Commissioner** to work with local councils on speeding up and delivering their plans, particularly focused on regenerating local centres.
- **Support local authority planning departments where possible using WMCA resources and staff**, to speed up the development process in the region, and champion the case for Government to permit the ringfencing of income for council planning departments.
- **Push through a number of priority schemes in local centres, for example:** Portersfield in Dudley, following the arrival of the Metro later this year, Mell Square in Solihull, The Gracechurch Centre in Sutton Coldfield, Ravenscourt in Brownhills and the Harborne Royalty.
- **Commission an expert review (“Land Commission 2”) into the housing & regeneration progress and powers** of the WMCA and the West Midlands Mayor, including examining whether the Combined Authority should have independent Compulsory Purchase powers, to **allow priority projects such as the Harborne Royalty to take place even where the local council does not have the resources to do so.**
- **Offer support and expertise to local groups who are seeking to restore or protect historic buildings**, either through Local Heritage Trusts or community ownership, following the successful example of the Historic Coventry Trust.
- **Become one of the first areas in the country to trial the new powers to fill empty units by auctioning their rents**, so they are always occupied and don’t leave vacant spaces in our high streets.
- **Continue to improve transport connections to local centres**, for example expanding our Metro plans to include Halesowen, Walsall and Chelmsley Wood, opening the new stations at Darlaston, Willenhall, Kings Heath, Moseley and Pineapple Road, and the new bus station in Dudley.
- **Support the creation of new local village centres, for example at Edgbaston Village in Birmingham** following the completion of the Metro to Five Ways, building new housing, knocking down the derelict tower, and working with the Calthorpe Estate to refine their masterplan and provide better connections through to Five Ways station.
- **Increase the density of housing in town centres**, so that we bring in more footfall to local shops and businesses, at the same time as protecting the Green Belt from new homes.
- **Continue to push Government to look again at Business Rates to help local businesses**, and to help even the playing field with online retailers.

CLEAN UP OUR PUBLIC SPACES

During the Commonwealth Games, we heard athletes, spectators and VIPs from around the world talk about just how spectacular Birmingham and the West Midlands looked for the Games, and we know this makes a real difference, not just to residents' daily experiences, but also to attract new business to the region.

Yet too often as Mayor, I see examples of places which are not maintained to a good standard or are **dirty and litter strewn**. Local councils are not always doing a good enough job at keeping our streets clean and tidy. That's why, if re-elected, I want to do what I can as Mayor to make sure the West Midlands makes a great first impression:

- **Set up a new 'First Impressions' Fund** to allow community groups to clean up and improve their areas - particularly focusing on areas where there are not existing funding sources like Business Improvement Districts.
- **Press local authorities to ensure that high streets, town and city centres are kept clean and presentable**, and work with Business Improvement Districts to support their existing excellent work on this.
- **Encourage more business sponsorship of roadsides, streets or local areas**, to foster local pride and bring in more resources for keeping.
- **Use the Combined Authority's environment funding to explore where we can add new trees and greenery into our high streets and local centres**, and ensure there is a long-term way to fund the maintenance and upkeep.



Cleaning up litter with local volunteers in Babbs Mill in Solihull

MAKING SURE THAT THE £1 BILLION LEADS TO REAL IMPROVEMENTS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

- **As a region, we have won over £1 billion of new Government funding** for local centres and high streets, supporting local authorities with their bids, and securing additional investment through the Combined Authority.
- The way we secured this funding was by **cross-party regional teamwork**, with local MPs working with local councils, local business leaders and the Mayor and the Combined Authority. Local councils, particularly in the Black Country, deserve credit for their work in securing this new investment in our region.
- The key now is to **spend the cash effectively** so it actually makes our high streets and town centres visibly more appealing, more sustainable for local businesses, and better all-round for local people.
- As Mayor, my role will be as follows:
 - **Appoint a dedicated Black Country Regeneration Commissioner** to work with local councils on speeding up and delivering their plans.
 - **Continue to back local schemes with WMCA funding**, and **attract further funding from Government**.
 - **Bring in private sector experts to support our councils** in how to sustainably improve our local centres, and **attract new business investment in local centres**.
 - Ensure that town centre improvements are **co-ordinated with the improvements to transport** which are being made across the network.
 - Using the Combined Authority's expert team and powers to **directly intervene in schemes to accelerate them** where this is appropriate.
 - Keep up the pressure on local councils and all partners to **deliver these projects at pace**: on time and on budget.

DUDLEY

WMCA and Government Funding Secured: Over £367 million for fourteen projects. If re-elected as Mayor, I will **work with Dudley Council to support them and deliver these projects.**

Projects Delivered and Funding Secured:

- **Dudley**
 - Metro extension to Dudley, opening this year after being talked about for over 30 years.
 - Health Innovation Dudley, redeveloping the former Dudley Hippodrome site into a new higher education facility training young people in health and life sciences courses.
 - Dudley Town Partnership, which has access to £20 million of Government funding to improve the town centre.
 - Dudley Interchange, replacing the bus station with a new bus-tram interchange.
 - Expansion of the Black Country Living Museum, including the new Forging Ahead area.
 - Portersfield, including the former Cavendish House site, which will provide new residential and commercial units.
 - Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology, a new technical training institute focused on science, technology, engineering and mathematics.
 - Blowers Green Road, providing 60 new homes near to the town centre on a cleaned up former industrial site.
 - £20 million Levelling Up Fund investment for Halesowen to regenerate the town centre.
- **Brierley Hill**
 - Metro extension from Dudley to Brierley Hill, securing easy connections to West Bromwich, Wolverhampton and Birmingham.
 - Brierley Hill Future High Streets Fund improving paving, planting and street furniture along the high street, improving the road junctions, renovating Brierley Hill library, and providing a new children's area.
 - Brierley Hill High Street Heritage Action Zone, repairing local historic buildings and improving the public space around the Civic Hall and War Memorial.
 - Brierley Hill and Merry Hill Metro access measures, to make sure that the new metro stops are well connected for pedestrians, cyclists and bus users.

Going Further in 2024-2028:

In addition to delivering the projects above, we will look to make progress on these additional projects:

- Work with Dudley Council on the plans for Dudley's Museum Quarter, including new entertainment and leisure venues.
- Daniels Land housing project, working on remediating the site and preparing it for new housing.
- Expand the leisure options in Flood Street in Dudley, including a potential new ice rink.
- Make progress on the new transport link between Brierley Hill and Stourbridge.
- Work with Dudley Council on major regeneration projects in:
 - Stourbridge, Halesowen, Lye
- Make progress on the extension of the Metro from Five Ways in Birmingham down the Hagley Road towards Bearwood and Halesowen.
- First Impressions Fund and access to Combined Authority housing & regeneration funds available to all local centres.

SANDWELL

WMCA and Government Funding Secured: Over £175 million for twenty-four projects. If re-elected as Mayor, I will work with Sandwell Council to support them and deliver these projects.

Projects Delivered and Funding Secured:

- **Cape Hill & Smethwick**
 - Smethwick Town Partnership, which has access to £20 million of Government funding to improve the town centre.
 - Midland Metropolitan University Hospital Learning Campus, building a new education centre to train up more healthcare professionals.
 - Grove Lane regeneration, buying and cleaning up former industrial sites for new housing.
 - New cycling and walking routes between Galton Bridge and Rolfe Street stations, Smethwick high street, Cape Hill and the Midland Met.
 - Rolfe Street Canalside Regeneration, regenerating the Smethwick Enterprise Centre and developing it into new homes.
- **Rowley Regis, Cradley Heath, Blackheath**
 - Cradley Heath Skills Centre, turning a car park into an education centre in conjunction with Sandwell College.
 - Blackheath bus station, consolidating bus stops on Market Place and improving the area around the Birmingham Road for pedestrians.
 - Britannia Park green space and community hub: building a new community space, car park and play area.
- **Great Bridge**
 - Making the Great Bridge Metro stop well-connected for pedestrians, cyclists and bus users to local destinations.
- **Oldbury**
 - Building new warehouse, logistics and industrial space on Seven Stars Road at the XPANSE 120 development.
 - Construction of a new West Midlands Ambulance Service Hub on Shidas Lane.
 - Cleaning up the former foundry site on Fountain Lane to provide over 200 new homes.
- **Tipton**
 - Tipton town centre regeneration, redevelopment properties on Owen Street and Union Street for both housing and commercial uses.
- **Wednesbury**
 - West Midlands Metro Depot, providing for the doubling of the tram fleet and up to 150 staff, and improving the power supply for the tram network.
 - Wednesbury town centre improvements, including better public spaces and new walking and cycling routes.
 - Wednesbury High Street Heritage Action Zone, improving the public space in Market Square, and restoring shopfronts.

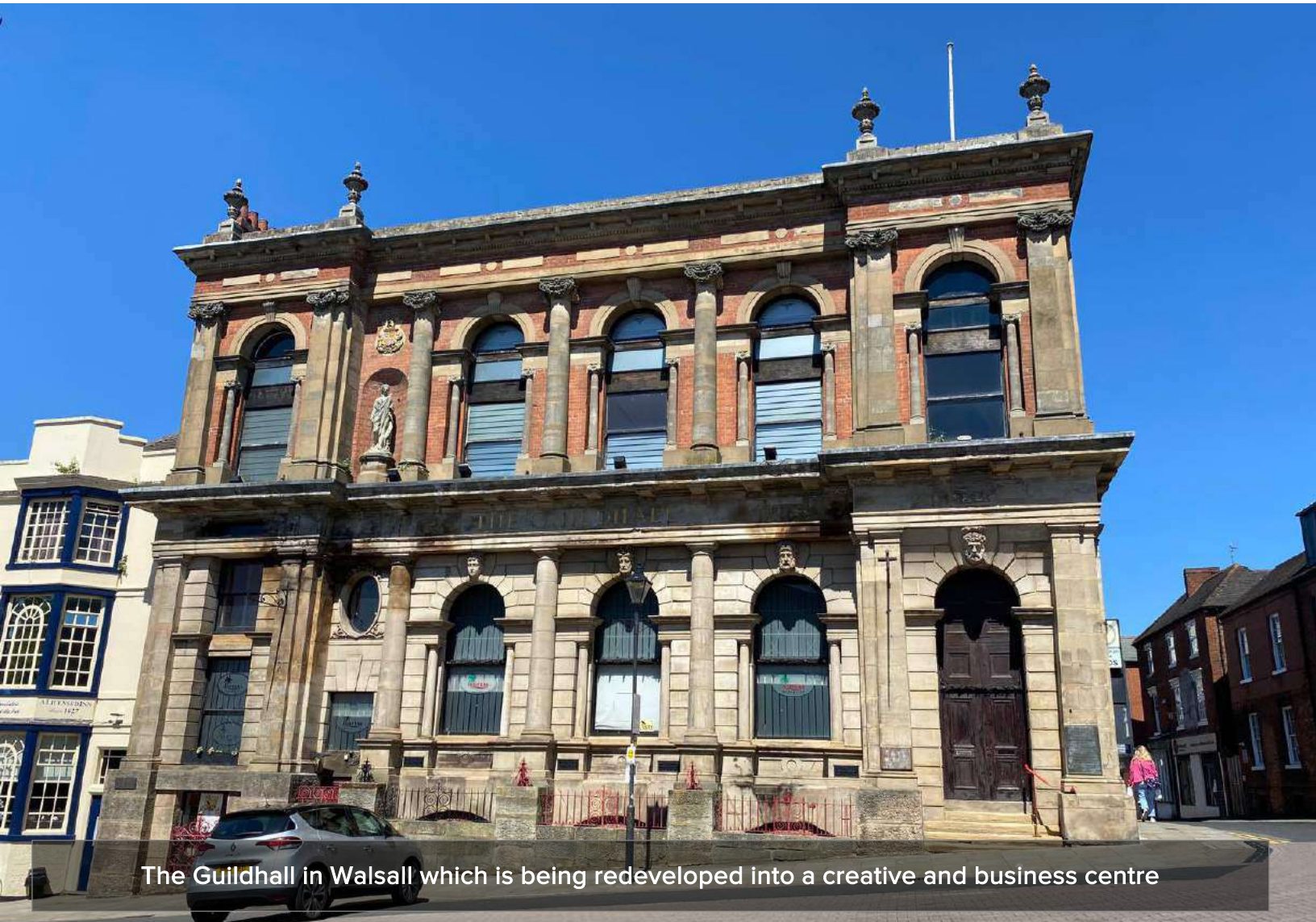
- **West Bromwich**

- Sandwell Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Centre, to be used by students from Central St. Michael's Sixth Form and Sandwell College.
- Demolition of the derelict car park at Bull Street, and bringing forward a new retail, office and residential development.
- New indoor market, and other site redevelopment to improve the town centre.
- Restoration of the Town Hall and Central Library on West Bromwich high street.
- Creation of four new green spaces in the town centre and new walking and cycling routes, and linking the town centre with Sandwell College and the Birmingham canal.

Going Further in 2024-2028:

In addition to delivering the projects above, we will look to make progress on these additional projects:

- Support the plans for West Bromwich town centre, by working with the council and attracting inward investment for generation across the Cultural Quarter, George Street and Queens Square Living, The Lyng, Urban Pocket Park and West Bromwich Central.
- Explore ways to regenerate the Chance Brothers Glassworks in Smethwick and the Soho Foundry.
- First Impressions Fund and access to Combined Authority housing & regeneration funds available to all local centres.



The Guildhall in Walsall which is being redeveloped into a creative and business centre

WALSALL

WMCA and Government Funding Secured: Over £160 million for fifteen projects. If re-elected as Mayor, I will work with Walsall Council to support them and deliver these projects.

Projects Delivered and Funding Secured:

- **Aldridge & Brownhills**
 - Opening a new rail station at Aldridge, providing direct connections to Walsall and Birmingham New Street.
 - Championed the redevelopment of Ravenscourt, with a new Aldi supermarket agreed.
- **Bloxwich**
 - Construction project to build, retrofit and refurbish over 250 homes across Bloxwich, while training young people in construction skills with Walsall College.
 - Improving George V Memorial Playing Field and refurbishing heritage buildings into community spaces.
 - New cycling and walking routes across Bloxwich town centre and improving footpaths on the local canal network.
 - Developing a new co-working space on the high street to support local small businesses and provide digital skills training.
- **Darlaston**
 - Opening a new rail station in Darlaston.
 - Darlaston Town Partnership, which has access to £20 million of Government funding to improve the town centre.
- **Willenhall**
 - Opening a new rail station in Willenhall.
 - Redeveloping new homes through the Willenhall Garden City project, and improving the walking and cycling links to the new Willenhall station.
- **Walsall**
 - Improving the connections between the rail station in Walsall, the bus station and Saddlers Shopping Centre and provide new retail spaces in the shopping centre.
 - Redeveloping the Guildhall building on the high street into a creative and business centre with a cafe and community spaces.
 - Improving the area around the New Art Gallery and the canal basin.
 - Developing a new community learning campus on the high street in Walsall Town centre.
 - Opened Walsall College's Green Lane Campus for construction skills and green jobs, and a new advanced electric vehicle technology skill centre at the Wisemore Campus.
 - Improving the footpaths along the Walsall canal.

Going Further in 2024-2028:

In addition to delivering the projects above, we will look to make progress on these additional projects:

- Extend the Metro from Wednesbury to Walsall along the disused former South Staffordshire rail line.
- Work with Walsall Council to deliver the Walsall Town Centre Masterplan including the Old Square Shopping Centre.
- First Impressions Fund and access to Combined Authority housing & regeneration funds available to all local centres.

WOLVERHAMPTON

WMCA and Government Funding Secured: Over £180 million for sixteen projects. If re-elected as Mayor, I will **work with City of Wolverhampton Council to support them and deliver these projects.**

Projects Delivered and Funding Secured:

- **Bilston**
 - Bilston Town Partnership, which has access to £20 million of Government funding to improve the town centre.
 - Build a new Bilston Health and Wellbeing Centre next to the Bert Williams Leisure Centre.
 - Redevelop Bilston market to provide new space under an improved canopy, with improved access for deliveries, cycling and walking.
 - Acquired Pipe Hall on Hall Street in order to renovate it for housing or community uses.
- **Wednesfield**
 - Improved public realm and shop front improvements.
 - Metro extension feasibility studies underway.
- **Wolverhampton**
 - Redeveloped Wolverhampton rail station and completed the Metro extension to Wolverhampton Station
 - Major renovation programme to support City of Wolverhampton College, and develop the new City Centre Learning Quarter around Old Hall Street.
 - New cycling, walking and bus routes across the city centre, and improved public spaces with new planting and street furniture.
 - Major new housing development of up to 600 new homes at Brewers Yard / Culwell Street Depot.
 - Attracted the second headquarters of the Government's Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities to Wolverhampton.

Going Further in 2024-2028:

In addition to delivering the projects above, we will look to make progress on these additional projects:

- Major new housing developments next to the rail station at Steam Mill, Sack Works, Horseley Fields and Canalside.
- Support the plans for the new Interchange 8 office development and new 150 bed hotel
- Develop new plans with the council and football club for the Molineux Quarter and the link to the city centre.
- Sort out the regeneration of the Beatties and Express and Star buildings
- Make progress on the extension of the Metro to New Cross Hospital and Wednesfield.
- Ensure walking, cycling and public transport links with Green Innovation Corridor Investment Zone work effectively.
- First Impressions Fund and access to Combined Authority housing & regeneration funds available to all local centres.

BIRMINGHAM

WMCA and Government Funding Secured: Over £130 million for 20 projects to date. If re-elected as Mayor, I will work with Birmingham City Council to support them and deliver these projects.

Projects Delivered and Funding Secured:

- **City Centre:**
 - Fought for HS2 to go ahead, in the face of the prospect of the full cancellation of the project, and securing commitments from the Prime Minister to build Phase 1 from Birmingham to London Euston in full, underpinning the regeneration of Birmingham.
 - Completed the extension of Metro to Five Ways, supporting new developments such as New Garden Square, and pushed ahead with extensions to the Clayton Hotel and to Digbeth, to open as soon as possible.
 - Working with developers to provide construction training on their sites, such as at Broad Street and Great Charles Street.
 - Funding for public realm improvements ahead of the Commonwealth Games
 - Supported arts venues with improvements and renovations such as Symphony Hall and the Birmingham Hippodrome.
- **Local Centres:**
 - **Sutton Coldfield:** £25 million funding secured to enable Sutton town centre masterplan, £20 million for the Sutton Coldfield Town Partnership, funding for the regeneration of the Gracechurch Centre and the renovation of the Town Hall.
 - **Digbeth:** Extension of the Metro brought forward, unlocked around 1,000 new homes on the Stoneyard development, secured new BBC headquarters and Steven Knight's Digbeth Loc studios.
 - **Erdington:** Redeveloping Erdington Baths with the Witton Lodge Community Association into a new community centre with workspace.
 - **Longbridge & Northfield:** Improved transport and fibre connections around Longbridge, and new cycling and walking infrastructure, development of new homes and space for businesses at MG Rover and West Longbridge.
 - **Edgbaston:** Arrival of the Metro to Five Ways.
 - **Kings Heath, Moseley, Stirchley:** New rail stations along the Camp Hill Line.
 - **Perry Barr:** Major housing development for the Commonwealth Games Athletes' Village, upgraded Perry Barr rail station, and developed a new industrial and logistics unit Barberry 46.
 - **Sheldon:** New retail park with three new units off the Coventry Road.

Going Further in 2024-2028:

In addition to delivering the projects above, we will look to make progress on these additional projects:

- Launch an international design competition to design a bridge or equivalent masterplan design to link between Colmore Row and the Jewellery Quarter.
- Review the links between New Street, Moor Street and Curzon Street stations ahead of the arrival of HS2 to make the connections easier and more attractive for pedestrians and cyclists.

- Review the bus stops and waiting areas around Birmingham City Centre, in particular between Moor Street, Dale End and Curzon Street.
- Find a new use and occupier for the ex-John Lewis space in Grand Central above Birmingham New Street station.
- Complete Clayton Metro extension, and push forward major developments such as Martineau Galleries between Curzon Street station and the city centre, and support the council with their plans for Smithfield.
- Move the Snow Hill redevelopment forward, in combination with the Midlands Rail Hub transport improvements.
- Use the Combined Authority's affordable housing programme to support the estate regeneration of Ladywood.
- Champion the next stages of the Paradise redevelopment and seek to attract new inward investors.
- Work with the Harborne Royalty Trust community group to acquire and redevelop the former Royalty cinema on Harborne High Street, including community and arts space.
- Reopen the Sutton Park Line Sutton Park with new stations at Walmley, Reddicap Heath, Sutton Park and Streetley.
- Continue to support the development of the Creative Quarter, get the Metro extension running as quickly as possible, ensure walking and cycling links to Curzon Street and the city centre are high quality, and begin the construction of the Digbeth viaduct Highline project.
- Explore new improvement projects for local centres along the routes of the new cross-city bus routes, for example in Oldbury, Smethwick, along the Soho Road, Oldbury, Hamstead, Perry Common, Tyburn, Walmley, Falcon Lodge, Yardley, Stechford, Moseley, Kings Heath, Druids Heath, Cotteridge, Hawkesley, Selly Oak, Barley Green, Northfield, Frankley and Longbridge.
- First Impressions Fund and access to Combined Authority housing & regeneration funds available to all local centres.

SOLIHULL

WMCA and Government Funding Secured: Over £100 million for four projects. If re-elected as Mayor, I will **work with Solihull Council to support them and deliver these projects.**

Projects Delivered and Funding Secured:

- **Solihull Town Centre**
 - Championed the Mell Square redevelopment
 - Campaigned against closure of Solihull police station
 - Improved connections from Solihull Station to the town centre, and conducted feasibility study into upgrading Solihull Station.
- **North Solihull**
 - Kingshurst regeneration project
 - Simon Digby College housing project

- **Arden Cross**
 - Funding for enabling infrastructure, car parking and development of a major high-density 'new town' style development at Arden Cross in Solihull.

Going Further in 2024-2028:

In addition to delivering the projects above, we will look to make progress on these additional projects:

- **Solihull Town Centre:** Secure inward investment for the Eastgate, Church Hill / Homer Road site, and Westgate developments.
- **North Solihull:** Work with Solihull Council on their Chelmsley Wood Town Centre Masterplan, develop a new culinary college in Chelmsley Wood with University College Birmingham, drive forward the plans for the Metro extension through East Birmingham to Chelmsley Wood.
- **Arden Cross:** Support the construction of the new homes, offices, and the proposed Warwick University Life Sciences campus at Arden Cross.
- First Impressions Fund and access to Combined Authority housing & regeneration funds available to all local centres.

COVENTRY

WMCA and Government Funding Secured: Over £280 million for ten projects to date. If re-elected as Mayor, I will **work with Coventry City Council to support them and deliver these projects.**

Projects Delivered and Funding Secured:

- Coventry City Centre South redesigned masterplan
- Provided £50 million funding for the new Two Friargate office building which has attracted new tenants such as Octopus Energy.
- Funded the rebuilding of Coventry Railway Station and a new multi-storey car park.
- Telegraph Hotel, redeveloping the former Coventry Telegraph building into a new hotel.
- Abbots Lane housing scheme providing 690 new homes on a former gas works site and a new park.
- Repair and restoration works in the Coventry High Street Heritage Action Zone.
- Provided funding for the Very Light Rail City Demonstrator between Coventry Station and the city centre.
- Funded public realm improvements in Coventry City Centre public realm as part of City of Culture.
- Refurbished the Pool Meadow bus station.






Going Further in 2024-2028:

In addition to delivering the projects above, we will look to make progress on these additional projects:






- Support the exciting plans for the City Centre Cultural Gateway in the old IKEA building, and secure the continued support of Government cultural bodies, including the Government Art Collection.
- Make progress with the next phase of the Friargate development, including securing new inward investment and occupiers.
- Provide further investment in new routes for Very Light Rail if the Demonstrator is successful.
- First Impressions Fund and access to Combined Authority housing & regeneration funds available to all local centres.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

PROMISES KEPT: 2021-2024

Commitments	Action	Kept
Get people back into training and work after the pandemic	Exceeded our target of 100,000 people into jobs and 135,000 trained in two years after the COVID-19 pandemic, through a landmark £515 million investment to help more local people gain the skills and qualifications they need.	
Give people the skills they need to succeed in their careers	Overseen the development of the best qualified workforce in the West Midlands ever, with a record 60% of residents being qualified to Level 3 and above, with 60,000 fewer people with no qualifications than in 2019, underpinned by a WMCA investment which is now around £170 million a year.	
Scale up our digital skills programmes	Increased the WMCA's investment in digital skills by 10x since 2019 (from £1 million to £10 million per year), including bootcamps in software development, data analytics, digital marketing, content creation, TV production and gaming, and other information technology training.	
World-class technical education for all who want it	Secured £48 million new funding for apprenticeships by beating the target for our Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Fund, and launched the West Midlands Regional Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering Training Plan to ensure our technical training helps to address skills gaps in the region.	
Provided training for those who need additional support in the jobs market	Exceeded targets with over 8,000 people going through our Sector-Based Work Academy and Construction Gateway programmes, and continued our successful Thrive at Work and Thrive into Work schemes to help those with mental health conditions back into work.	

KEY COMMITMENTS: 2024-2028

Keep up the pace of skills training in the region	Target 300,000 people through WMCA-funded training courses during the next Mayoral term, and keep up our positive momentum in securing new funding from Government , and aim to secure as large a single settlement for skills training as possible.	
Double down on our successful bootcamp training model	Increase the number of digital and creative bootcamp places available for young people , and try out the bootcamp approach in new sectors, for example in professional services. Work with universities and employers to ensure courses are rigorous , and seek to loosen Government funding rules to allow more innovative course options.	
Support young people to take on apprenticeships	Take a proactive approach to get more young people into apprenticeships , for example expanding trials of wage subsidies to give SMEs confidence before taking on apprentices, and expanding pre-apprenticeship programmes to get young people ready for the workplace.	
Give young people trusted tailored careers advice	Fund 40 dedicated full-time careers advisors in some of the most challenging schools in the West Midlands , to build relationships with young people and guide them through their career options, and explore new ways for employers to help, for example by making any work they do supporting careers education tax deductible .	
Get more control over youth unemployment programmes	Seek further devolution of employment support funding from the Department for Work and Pensions to allow us to fund more intensive local programmes such as a youth Individual Placement Scheme, and host programmes in the local community for example at Youth Hubs.	
Work closely with our region's world-class higher education institutions	Support exciting new university-led projects such as the proposed Warwick University Life Sciences campus at Arden Cross and the new culinary college in Chelmsley Wood with UCB, and lobby Government for a regional devolved settlement for public research & development funding.	

FOCUSING OUR SKILLS BUDGET ON RIGOROUS TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN GROWING INDUSTRIES

Since the West Midlands Combined Authority took full responsibility for the adult education budget in 2019, **we have had the chance in the region to set our own priorities for the skills system that meet the needs of local businesses.** For example, we have focused the funding on courses for manufacturing, green jobs, digital, health, life sciences and the creative industries, and we have focused on getting people to Level 3 and above.

We are starting to see the results, with the best qualified workforce ever in the West Midlands, but there is still more to do: the innovative work we have done on bootcamps and getting people back into work can be expanded, and we must seize more regional control of careers advice and education. If re-elected as Mayor, **I will continue to push for rigorous technical education that gives local people the job opportunities they need,** and matches up with the jobs our businesses have on offer.

Progress made:

- **Focused the £154 million adult education budget** controlled by the WMCA on technical education, **including £29 million for Level 3 skills training** and further increasing access to this training by **increasing the wage cap on those eligible for free Level 3 training from £19,000 to £30,000.**
- **Overseen the development of the best qualified workforce in the West Midlands ever,** with a record 60% of residents being qualified to Level 3 and above, with 160,000 more people with Level 3 qualifications or higher, and 60,000 fewer people with no qualifications than in 2019, underpinned by WMCA investment in Level 3 training increasing from £4.5 million in 2019 to £29 million in 2023.
- **Increased the WMCA's investment in digital skills by 10x since 2019 (from £1 million to £10 million per year),** including bootcamps in software development, data analytics, digital marketing, content creation, TV production and gaming, and other information technology training.
- Worked with businesses across the region **to raise £47.6 million to support the Apprenticeship Levy Fund, supporting 1,683 SMEs and creating over 4,000 apprenticeships,** beating our original target of £40 million.
- Championed the skills and employment opportunities from HS2, which have already seen over **4,000 unemployed people trained to work on HS2.**
- **Secured £11.25 million funding for digital, green, creative and health skills bootcamps** to equip people with the skills required to work in the fastest growing sectors, with **more than 2,000 adults who were unemployed or looking to upskill able to get better paid jobs through our skills bootcamps.**
- **Supported the upgrades of colleges and education facilities across the region,** including using £7.7 million of WMCA funding to build the City of Wolverhampton College Advanced Technology and Automotive Centre on its Wellington Road campus in Bilston.
- Worked closely with colleges to **ensure that the launch of the new technical T-Levels was successful** in the West Midlands and **launched the West Midlands Regional Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering Training Plan** to ensure T-level teaching helps to address skills gaps in the region, such as in advanced manufacturing and engineering.
- **Maintained funding for English as a Second Language training (ESOL)** and focused the funding on courses which would help people into employment.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Take a proactive approach to get more young people into apprenticeships,** for example expanding the trials of wage subsidies to give SMEs confidence before taking on apprentices, and expanding pre-apprenticeship programmes to get young people ready for the workplace.
- **Use Business Growth West Midlands to help support employers looking to hire apprentices or train their own staff,** building on the excellent partnership work the WMCA has done in the last four years.

- **Continue to focus the WMCA's skills funding on technical skills**, in particular scaling up digital and creative bootcamps and extending the approach to other high-growth sectors such as professional services, and **test new models of skills training delivery**, including digital methods such as artificial intelligence tutoring.
- **Support bids for more capital funding for colleges and training providers** for upgrades to existing facilities and for new facilities.
- **Continue to support funding for English as a Second Language training (ESOL) and commission an expert report into how additional languages** could improve young people's lives and grow the West Midlands economy through links to communities around the world, similar to the City Language Strategy undertaken in Manchester.
- **Work closely with the business community, in particular the Chambers of Commerce, to respond to the Local Skills Improvement Plan** and tailor our skills funding accordingly.



Meeting apprentices with the Doocey Group construction company

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE INTO BETTER CAREERS

We've got so many opportunities here in the region: jobs, training, apprenticeships, but often young people find it difficult to know what they want to do, and to navigate the system. Yet this is one of those areas where we just haven't had the budget, powers and responsibility to sort this until now.

If I'm re-elected Mayor, I will be taking bold action, such as **funding 40 dedicated full-time careers advisors in some of the most challenging schools in the West Midlands**, to build relationships with young people and guide them through their career options. **We must make more progress in supporting young people in choosing their careers.**

Progress made:

- **Exceeded our target of 100,000 people into jobs and 135,000 trained in two years after the COVID-19 pandemic**, through a landmark **£515 million investment** to help more local people gain the skills and qualifications they need.
- **Exceeded targets with over 8,000 people going through our Sector-Based Work Academy and Construction Gateway programmes**, and continued our successful Thrive at Work and Thrive into Work schemes to help those with mental health conditions back into work.
- **Oversaw the Commonwealth Games Jobs and Skills Academy which provided job opportunities and offered volunteers the chance to gain skills accreditation**, and secured over **£5 million** of the underspent budget from the Games to fund skills projects in the region.
- **Protected our half-price travel offer for 16-18 year olds in full-time education**, and continued to offer cheaper bus travel to jobseekers through the Workwise scheme.
- Continued the **successful "Swap Don't Drop" approach to making sure that students do not drop out of education and training by falling through the gaps**
- **Supported and championed local careers fairs across the region**, such as the Legacy Careers Connect Jobs fair in Newtown and the Dudley South Jobs & Skills Fair, to help deliver over a thousand new opportunities for local people.
- **Set up the West Midlands Careers Hub to co-ordinate careers activity** across the region, and **secured additional responsibility for shaping careers advice from Government** as part of the Deeper Devolution Deal.
- **Embedded the rigorous Gatsby benchmarks in the WMCA's careers work**, and worked closely with the Careers and Enterprise Company to support schools.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Fund 40 dedicated full-time careers advisors in some of the most challenging schools in the West Midlands**, to build relationships with young people and guide them through their career options.
- **Lobby strongly for existing careers funding to be devolved to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) from Government**, for example control of the regional contract for the National Careers Service and the funding currently allocated to the Careers and Enterprise Company.
- **Seek further devolution of employment support funding from the Department for Work and Pensions** to allow us to fund more intensive local programmes such as a youth Individual Placement Scheme, and host programmes in the local community for example at Youth Hubs.
- **Develop an enhanced version of the Gatsby benchmarks and careers guidance** tailored to the needs and unique challenges of the most challenging schools in the West Midlands.
- **Expand free public transport offers for those who need it to travel to work experience, job interviews and training placements**, and commit to protecting the half price travel offer for those aged 16-18 in education.
- **Improve the tracking of what every young person in the region does for education, training or employment from age 16 onwards**, to ensure individuals don't fall through the gaps.

- **Engage with every secondary school, sixth form and college head teacher or principal, relevant Governors and Multi-Academy Trust CEOs**, to ensure they have the opportunity to benefit from the West Midlands Careers Hub support.
- **Run more careers and job events for young people in local areas across the West Midlands.**
- **Explore ways to incentivise employers to take part in careers activities with young people in schools** such as work familiarisation tours, following the example of firms like Thomas Dudley, and work with Government to see if it is possible to **make any work firms do supporting careers education tax deductible.**



Meeting young people in Walsall to hear about their experiences of skills training

SUPPORTING OUR WORLD-CLASS UNIVERSITIES

Our universities in the region are critical to developing a highly skilled workforce, which is equipped for the challenges of the twenty-first century and to **research innovative new technologies which will support our future prosperity**. Even beyond their contribution to our skills base, it is estimated that they bring in over £4 billion to the region's economy, and they employ many thousands of people.

That's why as Mayor I have engaged closely with our universities, and will continue to do so if I am re-elected as Mayor.

Progress made:





- **Supported our universities in their successful funding bids for major projects**, including £20 million for the National Centre of Decarbonisation of Heat in Birmingham, £12 million Warwick Manufacturing Group funding from the Faraday Battery Challenge, £10 million grant for the Aston Institute for Membrane Excellence (AIME), and £11 million for the Birmingham Health Innovation Campus.
- **Secured Investment Zone status for sites across the West Midlands**, including the Wolverhampton University Science Park in the Wolverhampton Green Innovation Corridor, and the Coventry Gigapark site which will have the involvement of Warwick University.
- **Improved the transport links to our universities**, such as funding and supporting the opening of University train station, the Metro line extension to both Digbeth and Wolverhampton which will support Birmingham City University and Wolverhampton University, new electric buses, bikeshare and eScooters in Coventry to improve access to both Coventry and Warwick University.
- **Harnessed the expertise of our universities to help the Combined Authority** in delivering its priorities, for example funding the development of Very Light Rail with Warwick Manufacturing Group and policy-making with WM-REDI.
- **Championed the successful university sector in the West Midlands, including on student visa issues and on the UK's ongoing participation in Horizon Europe**, announced in September 2023.
- **Worked with our region's universities to marshal our innovation priorities** through the WMCA Innovation Board, and securing additional Government funding for the West Midlands Innovation Accelerator.

Plan for 2024-2028:





- **Support our universities with their development plans, championing bids for capital funding from Government**, for example exciting new projects such as the new culinary college in Chelmsley Wood with UCB, the Knowledge Quarter around Aston University and Birmingham City University, the Wellesbourne Innovation Centre, and the proposed Warwick University Life Sciences campus at Arden Cross.
- **Advocate for our university sector with Government, in particular on issues such as funding sustainability and international students**, to ensure that our universities remain successful in the years ahead.
- **Make a success of our Investment Zones**, attracting substantial inward investment from the private sector, and ensuring that our universities are involved in the governance and delivery where appropriate.
- **Continue to lobby Government for a regional devolved settlement for public research & development funding**
- **Support regional initiatives to invest in spinouts** such as the Minerva Business Angels and Midlands Mindforge, and increase access to capital from university entrepreneurs in the region.
- **Work with international experts at our universities on delivering West Midlands priorities**, such as with Professor Monder Ram and CREME on encouraging ethnic minority entrepreneurship.

HELP REDUCE YOUR ENERGY BILLS AND TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

PROMISES KEPT: 2021-2024

Commitments	Action	Kept
Meet our #WM2041 target of becoming a net zero region by 2041	Made good progress on developing our programmes to reduce carbon emissions, leading to the West Midlands being awarded an A-grade by the Carbon Disclosure Project, and seeing the WMCA ranked as the best Combined Authority by Climate Scorecard for the second year running.	
Accelerate the transition to electric vehicles	Developed plans for the biggest EV charging network outside London, including 10 new major electric vehicle supercharging stations, and made substantial progress electrifying the bus fleet, led by Coventry.	
Reduce fuel bills and carbon emissions in the region's homes and businesses	Launched the £24 million Business Energy Advice pilot scheme to provide businesses with help to reduce their energy costs, and secured around £85 million of Government funding to drive retrofit schemes in the region.	
Enhance the natural environment in the West Midlands	Encouraged local people to plant trees, with over 600,000 trees planted so far as part of the West Midlands Virtual Forest, and ran a programme of Community Green Grants for local groups to spend on nature projects in their area.	

KEY COMMITMENTS: 2024-2028

Stay on track to hit our goal of Net Zero by 2041	Continue with our plan to reduce carbon emissions in the WMCA, by 33% by 2026, and agree a new carbon reduction target for 2031 at the end of the current Five Year Plan.	
Continue to improve our public transport system to reduce emissions	Commit to achieving a fully zero emission West Midlands bus fleet by 2030. Work to shift trips to public transport and active travel by investing billions of pounds to expand the Metro and successfully open new and improved stations, such as those on the new Camp Hill line.	
Improve in air quality across the West Midlands	Establish a West Midlands regional air quality sensor network, to understand the state of clean air in the West Midlands, and seek new funding from Government to deliver the implementation plan	
Make the West Midlands the "retrofit" capital of the UK	Aim to have successfully retrofitted over 50,000 homes across the region by 2028. Create thousands of jobs for retrofit and heating, and to ensure our skills and training funding is targeted to provide more training places for the new green jobs.	

Promote the West Midlands' role at the centre of the shift to electric vehicles

Accelerate the West Midlands rollout of electric vehicle charging points at homes, businesses and public places, and capitalise on the growth of electric charging point engineering, planning, installation and maintenance to create thousands of new jobs across the West Midlands.



Improve the natural environment in the West Midlands

Encourage tree-planting across the West Midlands and grow the West Midlands virtual forest by another 800,000 trees by 2028, increasing the tree canopy cover across the region.



Launching the Business Energy Advice Service with Lord Callanan at Alucast in Wednesbury

WEST MIDLANDS 2041: REDUCING OUR CARBON EMISSIONS TO NET ZERO

We have committed as a region to tackling the climate emergency and have set the target of reaching Net Zero by 2041 based on independent scientific advice. This is a challenging goal, and it requires a major programme of activities to reduce emissions from transport, homes and industry.

We have already seen carbon emission per person fall by 32% from 2013 to 2021, whilst the economy has grown substantially in the West Midlands. But we have much more to do to hit our ambitious targets, and play our part in global efforts to decarbonise, and **I remain committed to reducing our carbon emissions if re-elected as Mayor.**



Being shown the new electric vehicle charging gigahub at the NEC with Saqib Bhatti MP

A GREENER CLEANER TRANSPORT SYSTEM

Transport makes up roughly a third of our region's carbon emissions. Therefore **to hit our Net Zero targets we need to clean up the way we travel around the region**. That means getting out of our cars and onto less polluting forms of transport like buses, trains, cycling and walking, and for those vehicle trips which are necessary we need to switch to greener technology.

We have already invested billions of pounds in improving public transport and active travel infrastructure in the region to do exactly this, but there's more to do.

We are working to make the West Midlands the heart of the electric vehicle industry. Working with automotive and manufacturing companies, and research and innovation centres on developing new technology, will set us up to have a globally competitive industry. But closer to home, we also need to make the West Midlands an easy and convenient place to own an electric vehicle, in particular by improving our charging network.

There's lots to do, and if re-elected Mayor, **I will be determined to clean up our transport system**:

Progress made:

- **Contributed to the West Midlands being recognised alongside 121 cities** across the globe for its bold leadership on environmental action and transparency, oversaw **the award of an A-grade by the Carbon Disclosure Project**, and saw the **WMCA ranked as the best Combined Authority by Climate Scorecard** for the second year running.
- **Earmarked £24 million to make electric vehicle charging accessible for 90% of the West Midlands**, with the creation of **10 supercharging stations**, each home to **up to 100 rapid chargers**, with Longbridge and Erdington the first to be agreed, helping to make electric vehicle ownership viable.
- **Supported the investment into the Coventry-Warwick Gigapark**, which will be home to a **brand new electric car battery gigafactory** and will bring in **£2.5 billion in private sector investment** into our region.
- **Oversaw an increase in the number of rapid electric vehicle chargers**, with the rate of charging points per person in the WMCA now above the England average.
- **Continue to support the UK Battery Industrialisation Centre** to deliver the vision of becoming the UK's home of battery research and innovation.
- **Promoted the efforts of our local colleges to provide the skills and training** that local people require to obtain green jobs, such as **backing Sandwell College's Electric Vehicle and Hybrid Vehicle training courses**.
- **Backed National Express in their £150 million electrification efforts**, with Coventry's becoming the UK's first all-electric bus city.
- **Supported the roll out of Very Light Rail in Coventry with up to £72 million of investment**, along with further investment in the newly opened Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre (VLRNIC) in Dudley.
- **Collaborated with Zero Avia and Birmingham Airport** to support plans to create a new Hydrogen facility in the region.
- **Championed the development of the world's first urban airport in Coventry**, helping to keep our region at the forefront of the green industrial revolution.
- **Attracted private investment to support electric vehicle charging infrastructure across our region**, such as working closely with BP Pulse to launch the UK's largest electric vehicle charging hub at the NEC.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Continue to turbocharge the region-wide rollout of new electric vehicle charging points**, both on street, at people's homes to charge cars overnight, and at businesses and public places, and explore the creation of further supercharging stations at key locations across the region.
- **Ensure equal access to electric vehicle charging points in all areas across the region**, with extra support for the rollout in the Black Country, which currently has a lower number of charging points.
- **Commit to achieving a fully zero emission West Midlands bus fleet by 2030**, including another 300 electric buses for National Express, and work with our bus operators and providers such as Zenobe to build out the required charging station infrastructure expanding it from Coventry bus depot to Yardley Wood and Perry Barr depots.
- **Train more young people in the engineering, planning, installation and maintenance jobs which we will need during the transition to electric vehicles**, for example at Walsall, Wolverhampton and Sandwell Colleges.
- **Explore opportunities to attract private investment and partnerships to develop new models of financing electric charging infrastructure in the region**, such as emulating the partnership with BP Pulse at the NEC, by engaging with other energy providers to explore future partnerships and sponsoring of supercharging stations across the region.



Examples of the types of retrofit improvements the Combined Authority is funding

REDUCING YOUR ENERGY BILLS AND MAKING BUILDINGS GREENER

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, we saw a spike in energy prices which fed through to bills for people here in the West Midlands. This only emphasised the need for us to improve the fuel efficiency of homes and other buildings in the West Midlands. **This is one of the best ways we can tackle climate change, whilst also saving money on energy bills.**

We have begun ramping up our programme of retrofit for homes and businesses across the region. This will require thousands of people to be trained in the right skills, and will need substantial Government investment to get our buildings up to high energy efficiency standards. **If re-elected I will deliver the most ambitious retrofitting programme in the country,** to help make homes and business premises warmer, more energy efficient, and cut energy bills.

Progress made:

- **Launched the £24 million Business Energy Advice pilot scheme** to offer businesses a free energy audit and then the potential to apply for up to £100,000 of match funding towards the cost of the recommended measures.
- **Secured around £85 million of Government funding to drive retrofit schemes in the region,** including for the retrofit of 300 homes in Elmdon and Foleshill to reduce carbon emissions & help people face the challenges of rising fuel bills.
- **Secured £6.2 million Government funding for the Net Zero Neighbourhood project following a successful pilot in Brockmoor in Dudley.** This project aims to make a whole local area energy efficient through loft, cavity and solid wall insulation, solar panels and electric vehicle charging points.
- **Made funding available to regional charities to retrofit their premises,** such the £600,000 project with St. Basil's to improve the quality and energy efficiency of their 'youth village' accommodation for homeless young people in Sandwell.
- Secured a commitment from Government in the Deeper Devolution Deal, that **net zero and retrofit Government funding for the region is to be under West Midlands control from 2025,** as part of the WMCA's single settlement.
- **Commissioned an expert report ('Homes for the Future') to develop a regional strategy and standards for zero carbon homes,** going further than the national Future Homes Standard, to make sure West Midlands residents get the best possible quality of homes
- **Championed a number of flagship green housing developments across the region,** including providing funding to support the development of over 1,000 green modular homes at the Port Loop site in Birmingham, and supporting plans to deliver up to 350 new all-electric homes on the former MG Rover site in Birmingham.
- **Partnered with the Retrofit Academy and other providers to fund skills bootcamps** for local people to train for new qualifications and get jobs in retrofit.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Retrofit over 50,000 homes with energy saving measures by 2028,** using the funding secured in the Deeper Devolution Deal, with a medium-term target of 300,000 homes retrofitted (heating and energy) to hit our Net Zero target (around a quarter of the 1.2 million dwellings in the West Midlands).
- Work with investors and financial institutions to **develop a financial model for the mass retrofit of homes** across the West Midlands, and look at options for individuals to take out **Green Loans to fund retrofit in their homes** which will save them long-term on their energy bills
- **Convene a major Mayoral Summit to develop an environmental plan for the commercial property sector in the region,** examining issues such as the retrofit of commercial buildings and embedded carbon.

- Develop the Business Energy Advice pilot and the West Midlands Industrial Energy Taskforce into a **more ambitious programme to decarbonise the industrial premises in the region**, reducing the cost of energy bills to small businesses.
- Ensure that new homes funded by the WMCA, including through the new Affordable Homes Programme, meet high energy efficiency standards, and ensure estate regeneration also includes the opportunity for local people to upgrade their energy efficiency in their homes.
- As the demand for skilled retrofit engineers increases, ramp up the funding for skills and training in these green jobs such as heat pump installers, glaziers and retrofit engineers.
- Continue to seek the devolution of the Energy Company Obligation funding which energy companies pay so that we can coordinate and control our decarbonisation plans as a region.
- Champion regional trials of new technologies such as using hydrogen to heat homes, working with partners like Cadent and Birmingham University's National Centre for the Decarbonisation of Heat, and win our share of Government funds such as the £240 million Net Zero Hydrogen Fund.



Announcing a WMCA Community Green Grant at Reedswood Park in Walsall

TAKING CARE OF NATURE AND OUR SURROUNDINGS

Nature thrives in unexpected places across the West Midlands, whether along canal towpaths in Walsall, an urban park in Coventry or on the roof of a skyscraper in Birmingham. Alongside our push for Net Zero, **improving the natural environment in the West Midlands is a real priority** - making the region a better place to live. We've made a start with the West Midlands Virtual Forest and the Community Green Grants scheme, but **we must go further to enhance nature in the region in the next four years.**

Progress made:

- **Secured a total of more than £650 million from the Government to clean brownfield sites** for new homes and business, to reduce the pressure on the region's green belt.
- **Funded new developments on these brownfield sites**, such as Abbots Lane in Coventry, SPARK / Phoenix 10 in Walsall, Midland Met Learning campus in Sandwell, Bilston Urban Village in Wolverhampton, and Icknield Port Loop in Birmingham, and **blocked the use of any West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) funding for unacceptable green belt development.**
- **Championed local campaigns for the protection of green spaces in the region**, such as Corbett Meadow in Stourbridge, the Straits and Majors Fold in Gornal, Barrows Lane fields in Yardley, and the Coundon Wedge in Coventry.
- **Championed the West Midlands Virtual Forest to encourage people to plant trees in their local area, with over 600,000 trees planted so far**, with an additional 40,000 trees being planted as part of the Queen's Green Canopy.
- **Committed £4 million funding from the Commonwealth Games Legacy funding to environmental projects**, such as the new Community Environment Fund.
- **Launched and funded the £1 million Community Green Grants scheme** to support nature projects across the West Midlands, such as granting £400,000 for the "Love your River Stour project", as well as supporting the feeding Coventry & Caldmore Community Garden
- **Engaged closely with the Woodland Trust to attract £300,000 in funding** to boost tree planting efforts across the region.
- **Hosted the WMCA Natural Environment Awards** which recognise achievements of West Midlands organisations in protecting, restoring and enhancing nature in the region.
- **Supported and worked closely with local councils to successfully bid for government funding** to improve the environment, such as **Walsall Council winning £5 million from Government to transform Bloxwich's parks and green spaces** and working with the Canal and River Trust to use funding obtained from the Towns Fund to improve over 9 miles of Walsall's canals.
- **Building new developments on brownfield first, and therefore protecting the green spaces around the edge of the West Midlands**, and opposing proposals which are inappropriate with councils and campaigners.
- **Supported local community efforts** to see Dudley Council designate Corbett Meadow as a Local Green space.
- **Worked closely with Government to ensure** the West Midlands was the only major urban area to be **chosen for DEFRA's two-year Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) programme**, with the aim of bringing more private sector investment into local projects to help protect nature and tackle climate change.
- **Encourage developers on Combined Authority funded projects to enhance the natural environment** and contribute to a biodiversity net gain, such as in Longbridge and at Abbots Lane in Coventry.
- **Installing the biggest regional air quality sensor network outside London**, to understand the state of clean air in the West Midlands.

- **Attracted £500,000 investment from Airbnb to support our climate plans** as part of the legacy of the Commonwealth Games, such as helping to support the Handsworth Association of Schools to teach carbon reduction.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Stick with our brownfield first approach**, prioritising regeneration of existing sites rather than permitting green belt development.
- Work with local authorities as they review their Local Plans, and **encourage them to remove proposed green belt sites from development plans where possible and to focus on brownfield development**, following the updated National Planning Policy Framework.
- **Champion local people in their campaigns to protect green spaces** in the West Midlands from inappropriate development, such as Wilderness Lane in Great Barr and Walsall Arboretum, lobbying councils and the Government as appropriate.
- Make the most of the Government's new biodiversity net gain requirements to **improve green spaces for residents and nature in the West Midlands**, for example by helping to develop viable West Midlands off-site projects for developers to invest in.
- **Encourage tree-planting across the West Midlands and grow the West Midlands virtual forest by another 800,000 trees by 2028**, increasing the tree canopy cover across the region.
- **Secure funding to deliver the implementation plan** set out in November 2023 in the WMCA Air Quality Framework.
- **Seek further funding for natural capital projects across the West Midlands**, in particular make the most of the opportunities for biodiversity net gain credits and offsetting, by building a portfolio of regional sites which could benefit.
- **Use the business case for the West Midlands Walking trail to secure funding** for route enhancements, wayfinding signage and encouraging people to use the proposed 180-mile route around the West Midlands, linking with waterways, natural and heritage sites in each borough.
- **Explore plans for an Eden Project West Midlands**, as a visitor attraction and environmental research centre.
- **Engage closely with the National Trust's plans for the Eight Hills Regional Park** and to explore the potential to include neighbouring green areas in Birmingham and the Black Country.
- **Work with the Canal and River Trust to enhance our local canal network**, such as supporting the restoration of the Bradley Arm in the Black Country and the Lapal Canal in Selly Oak, and improving access, towpaths and signage for recreational users.

HOW IT STARTED







HOW IT'S GOING





Improvements to canal towpaths in Walsall

MAKING THE WEST MIDLANDS A VIBRANT CULTURAL AND SPORTING REGION

PROMISES KEPT: 2021-2024

Commitments	Action	Kept
“Oversaw a successful Birmingham Commonwealth Games”	Hosted a successful Commonwealth Games, with benefits for local businesses, local young people, new trade and investment opportunities and permanent transport improvements for residents, like refurbished rail stations and new rapid bus routes.	
“Use Coventry City of Culture to lead our region’s recovery from COVID-19”	Provided over £35 million regional funding for the successful Coventry City of Culture, with over in-person audiences totalling 500,000, with another 500,000 online, generating £172 million direct investment in the region.	
“Kickstart the region’s cultural renaissance”	Oversaw an above average increase in the Arts Council funding (+22%), totalling £150 million for arts in the West Midlands and Warwickshire over the next three years, and supported the region’s arts venues with their improvement and expansion plans, such as the old Guildhall in Walsall and the Hippodrome in Birmingham.	
“Make the West Midlands a world-class sporting region”	Secured further international sporting events in the West Midlands, such as the 2026 European Athletics Championships, and strengthened the programme of community sports in the region, and brought forward plans for new sports facilities to the West Midlands such as a velodrome.	

KEY COMMITMENTS: 2024-2028

Agree a new Creative Arts Devolution Deal with Government	Push for additional arts funding for the West Midlands, explore further support for local institutions, such as whether the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and its collections could be supported sustainably with national funding, and jointly develop a new National Centre for Musical Theatre with the Arts Council, to be located in the West Midlands.	
Support new creative and cultural events in the West Midlands	Back the ambitious plans for FutureFest, a new SXSW-style tech and creative festival, with visitors from around the world, and continue to grow and other industry conferences, and the Birmingham Jewellery Biennial, to support the region’s creative jewellery trade and creatives.	
Bring in new international sporting events to the West Midlands	Put the West Midlands on the global stage, and bid to host more national and international cultural and sporting events, such as the Ryder Cup, the Invictus Games, and international test matches at Edgbaston, using the Major Event Fund to support these efforts.	

Improve travel to and from football games in the region

Launch a Matchday Travel Taskforce, bringing together Transport for West Midlands, transport operators, councils, and supporter groups to find ways to improve travel to and from games, and **deliver an upgraded rail station at Witton in time for the 2028 UEFA European Football Championship** at Villa Park.



Develop a world-class selection of sporting venues

Develop the business case for the West Midlands Velodrome, examine the potential to combine it with a new 3,000-5,000 venue in the region for sports such as netball, table tennis, basketball, snooker and hockey, **then seek the funding to build it.**



Help the West Midlands win its fair share of public funding

Push for additional arts and sports funding for the West Midlands to support our region's renaissance, and fight back against the centralisation of funding in London and the South East.



SUPPORTING OUR WORLD-CLASS ARTS SECTOR

Progress made:

- **Secured £20 million of new funding for culture and heritage from Government**, including to support work placements, bursaries and training for freelancers, new creative commissions, grants for creative businesses, and cultural capital projects, partially from the Commonwealth Games underspend.
- **Provided over £35 million regional funding for the successful Coventry City of Culture**, with over in-person audiences totalling 500,000, with another 500,000 online, generating £172 million direct investment in the region.
- **Championed the Birmingham 2022 Festival of arts and cultural activities during the Commonwealth Games in 2022**, with 200 events, over 100,000 participants which made culture a key part of the Games.
- **Oversaw an above average increase in the Arts Council funding (+22%)**, totalling £150 million for arts in the West Midlands and Warwickshire over the next three years.
- **Used the Commonwealth Games legacy funding to support cultural events across the region**, including The Black Country Festival in Dudley, the Godiva Festival and Reggae Fever in Coventry, and the Birmingham Weekender Festival.
- **Lobbied for financial support for creative organisations across the West Midlands during and after the COVID-19 pandemic**, including support for the Hippodrome, the Birmingham REP, the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry, the Midlands Arts Centre, the Birmingham Royal Ballet, and the Black Country Living Museum.
- **Supported the region's arts venues with their improvement and expansion plans**, such as the old Guildhall in Walsall, The Hippodrome and Symphony Hall in Birmingham.
- **Keep on backing the West Midlands Cultural Leadership Board as the way to co-ordinate and lead the sector in the region**, and **appointed heavyweight new Chair Skinder Hundal in 2023.**
- **Directed the WMCA's skills funding to support training and jobs in the creative industries**, such as bootcamps and apprenticeships in the theatre sector, for example the Creative Venue Technician Bootcamp with Solihull College.

- **Set up the new £6 million Major Event Fund** to attract international business, cultural and sporting events to the West Midlands, and **led the successful bid for Visit Britain to select Birmingham as its new headquarters** from April 2024.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Successfully deliver the existing WMCA-funded culture and arts programmes**, including grants for local arts organisations, support for councils, and creative skills bootcamps.
- **Agree a new Creative Arts Devolution Deal with Government, including:**
 - **Push for additional arts funding for the West Midlands**, both capital and revenue, to support our cultural renaissance, and fight back against the centralisation of funding in London.
 - **Gain commitment to a longer-term settlement for arts and cultural funding in the West Midlands**, and to creative arts education and training in the region at universities, colleges, schools and specialist institutions.
 - **Explore whether the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and its collections could be supported sustainably with national funding**, potentially by becoming a National Museum.
 - **Jointly develop a new National Centre for Musical Theatre with the Arts Council**, to be located in the West Midlands.
 - **Secure additional funding from DCMS to build culture and the arts into our plans for Growth Zones** in East Birmingham, North Solihull, Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall, and ensure retained business rates can be used for arts and cultural activities.
 - **Provide support and training to arts leaders in the region on financial resilience and sustainability**, partnering with UK and international experts, potentially using our apprenticeship levy transfer fund.
 - **Build on the partnership agreed in the Trailblazer Devolution Deal** to work with Arts Council England, Historic England, Sport England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the National Lottery Community Fund and Visit Britain, to align our investments in the arts and culture.
- **Back the ambitious plans for FutureFest, a new SXSW-style tech and creative festival**, hosted in Birmingham with visitors from around the world, and continue to grow and other industry conferences, and **the Birmingham Jewellery Biennial**, to support the region's creative jewellery trade and creatives.
- Commission a **review of music education provision for young people in the West Midlands**, looking at how to build on our world-class cultural assets such as the Shireland CBSO Academy in Sandwell, the Junior Conservatoire and our music services across the region. This review would **examine the case for a new West Midlands Music Fund to provide scholarships to support young people from low income families** in their musical development.
- **Scale up our creative bootcamps and skills provision** to meet the skills gaps in the sector, including bootcamps, apprenticeships and sector-based work academy programmes.
- **Explore ways to support arts organisations and venues which have been affected by local authorities reducing their funding contributions.**
- **Champion local arts venues, including brokering a new plan for the Crown, Electric Cinema and Station Street in Birmingham**, to retain our heritage and the cultural uses of the buildings.
- **Improve transport connections to arts and cultural venues, such as more frequent faster trains to Stratford-Upon-Avon and new Metro services connecting Dudley, Birmingham and Wolverhampton**, and **commit to new night bus services** to allow people to get home after a night out, supporting the night-time economy and cultural venues in our local centres.
- **Maintain the role of the expert West Midlands Combined Authority Cultural Leadership Board.**



Giving away equipment from the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games to local community clubs

BIRMINGHAM COMMONWEALTH GAMES 2022

The Commonwealth Games was a once in a generation opportunity to present Birmingham and the wider West Midlands to the world, and the Games also great opportunities for people in the region.

The Birmingham Commonwealth Games was the spectacle of a lifetime:

- **40,000 job opportunities**
- **Online streaming records smashed**
- **1.24 million ticketed spectators**
- **5 million visitors**
- **13,000 fantastic volunteers**
- **2,500 businesses engaged with**
- **Watched in 134 countries**
- **1 iconic bull**

With long-lasting legacy benefits across the West Midlands:

- **Secured £70 million of the underspend from delivering the Commonwealth Games under budget for the West Midlands.**
- **New transport infrastructure for local people, such as new stations and bus routes, and of course, Ozzy the Bull saved and installed in Birmingham New Street station.**
- **New and improved sporting facilities at the Alexander Stadium and the Sandwell Aquatics Centre.**
- **Legacy sports activities and grants for local groups in all boroughs of the West Midlands, such as Coventry Moves and the Guardian Ballers, and provided 16,000 pieces of leftover sporting equipment to almost 300 clubs in the region.**
- **New inward investment from international companies supported by the Trade, Tourism and Investment Programme, and improved perception of Birmingham and the West Midlands across the world.**



With volunteers at the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games

MAKING THE WEST MIDLANDS A WORLD-CLASS SPORTING REGION

Progress made:

- **Brought the Commonwealth Games to the West Midlands with almost a billion pounds of additional funding for the region**, and successfully hosted the Games, putting the region on the global stage.
- **Supported professional sports clubs across the region by brokering deals with owners**, for example with Coventry City's return to the CBS arena, the new Knighthead / Birmingham City Football Club plans for Wheels Park, and funding additional development at Edgbaston with Warwickshire.
- **Secured major international sporting events in the West Midlands**, such as games for the 2028 UEFA European Football Championship at Villa Park and Birmingham hosting the 2026 European Athletics Championships.
- **Used the Commonwealth Games legacy funding to secure new sporting events across the region**, including the European Judo Union Junior Cup in Walsall, ESL and SuperDome eSports in Solihull, Urban Sports FISE Xperience and the Kabaddi World Cup in Wolverhampton.
- **Secured the opportunity to host SportAccord, the world's top summit for international sports events, in 2024 in Birmingham**, with the opportunity to showcase the region as a host for new sports events and investments.
- **Funded the development of the business case for a new West Midlands velodrome**, in partnership with Sport England.
- **Improved transport connection with major sporting venues across the West Midlands**, for example progressing the **upgraded rail station plans at Witton near Villa Park**, and opening up the new Metro line to connect Dudley with Wolverhampton, the Hawthorns and Birmingham.
- **Celebrated the sporting achievements of people with disabilities**, such as hosting the first fully integrated Para sports at the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, and the IBSA Blind Sports World Games.
- **Championed community sports in the region**, particularly in the period after the Commonwealth Games, by donating Commonwealth Games equipment, and providing legacy funding for sporting activities, and **launched a 10-year joint sport and physical activity plan for the West Midlands with Sport England**, with £5.5 million funding.



Trying Kabaddi ahead of the 2025 World Cup to be hosted in the West Midlands



Visiting the British Judo Headquarters in Walsall to announce new funding

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Bid for new major sporting events**, for example, securing the 2027 Invictus Games in Birmingham, the Ryder Cup 2035 at the Belfry and international test matches at Edgbaston.
- **Make a success of the sporting events we have attracted to the region, and make the most of the 2024 Sport Accord industry conference in Birmingham**, with senior leaders from every major sporting body coming to see what the West Midlands has to offer.
- **Deliver an upgraded rail station at Witton in time for the 2028 UEFA European Football Championship matches held at Villa Park.**
- **Work with the proposed Gratitude Games**, a multi-sports event for emergency responders across the UK raising money for emergency responders' mental health charities, to identify funding, and **explore bidding for the World Police and Fire Games** to come to the region.
- **Develop the business case for the West Midlands Velodrome then seek the funding to build it, examine the potential to combine it with a new 3,000-5,000 venue in the region** for sports such as netball, table tennis, basketball, snooker and hockey, and **support Dudley Council with their plans for a new ice rink in Dudley.**
- **Develop a new programme to encourage grassroots cricket in the West Midlands**, working with the ECB, Warwickshire County Cricket Club, encouraging the sharing of facilities for example between primary and secondary schools in the region, and secure investment from the Government's £35 million grassroots cricket programme.
- **Support clubs and sports venues in the region with financing support**, where there is a clear business case and public benefit, for example supporting Edgbaston with their plans for improvements to the stadium.

CHAMPIONED OUR REGION'S THRIVING FOOTBALL CLUBS

Progress made:

- **Supported the region's clubs in attracting new ownership and investment**, such as supporting the process of the recent Birmingham City takeover, working closely with SISU to bring new investment into Coventry City, and working with Action for Albion to ensure fans' views were taken into account in recent West Bromwich Albion takeover talks.
- **Backed our region's clubs development plans around their stadiums**, like supporting Birmingham City with their plans for a new fanzone for supporters and stadium development at Wheels Park.
- **Successfully hosted Commonwealth Games events at our football stadiums**, such as the Rugby Sevens, Judo and Wrestling at the CBS Arena.
- **Secured future international football events in the West Midlands**, with Villa Park being selected as a host stadium for Euro 2028.
- **Improved transport connection with our football stadiums across the West Midlands**, for example progressing the **upgraded rail station plans at Witton near Villa Park**, funding the **full refurbishment of Wolverhampton and Coventry stations**, and **opening up the new Metro line** to connect Dudley with Wolverhampton, the Hawthorns and Birmingham.
- **Developed the Regional Transport Co-ordination Centre to reduce congestion across the region**, and intervened with operators to improve services for fans on matchdays.
- **Supported grassroots football organisations, such as Birmingham Youth Sports Academy as an ambassador.**

Plan for 2024-2028:





- **Champion our world-class professional football clubs**, supporting their development plans as Mayor, working with supporters and owners, and raising and escalating supporter concerns with Ministers and national bodies where needed.
- **Support our region’s amateur football clubs, using Commonwealth Games legacy funding where possible**, for example supporting Stourbridge FC and Dudley Town FC with new and improved facilities.
- **Support regeneration plans around our stadiums**, such as the exciting plans that Birmingham City and Knighthead have for Wheels Park in Bordesley Green, and efforts to develop the Molineux Quarter in Wolverhampton.
- **Continue to support grassroots football in the region**, working with the FA, Sport England and the region’s clubs to secure further funding and ensure every child gets the chance to play football if they choose to do so.
- **Launch a Matchday Travel Taskforce**, bringing together Transport for West Midlands, transport operators, councils, and supporter groups to find ways to improve travel to and from games:
 - **Push to increase the frequency of transport services on matchdays**, and for cup matches for example in London, bring transport operators (such as Avanti, Chiltern, WM Trains, coach operators) together to **make sure services are available to get fans home after games** (making backup arrangements where games go to extra time).
 - **Reduce congestion and manage parking** around our stadiums on matchdays, working with councils and clubs, to provide park & ride style shuttle buses, similar to those used for the Commonwealth Games, Edgbaston Cricket Ground and the new AV82 shuttle bus services from Birmingham City Centre,
 - **Deliver an upgraded rail station at Witton in time for the 2028 UEFA European Football Championship** at Villa Park.
 - **Club-specific improvements to access from public transport, for example provide better disabled access at Bescot Station in Walsall**, working with the Walsall Supporters Trust, and **explore options to improve Coventry Arena station**, including the potential to run more frequent services with a new bay platform at Coventry station.
 - **Explore whether including public transport as part of match tickets** could increase public transport usage (in a similar way to the Commonwealth Games), and explore options for matchday public transport discounts.
 - **Work with local authorities to make sure that their traffic control centres are manned during match hours**, and that they are working effectively with the Regional Transport Co-ordination Centre.






Visiting the “Back on Your Feet” pilot project at Walsall Football Club

HELPING THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST

PROMISES KEPT: 2021-2024

Commitments	Action	Kept
Expand our work to “design out” homelessness	Seen the rough sleeper count halve in the region from 169 in 2018 to 75 in 2023, for example by supporting over 500 people through our Housing First scheme.	
Tackle the mental health challenge in the region	Helped over 1,000 people with long-term mental health conditions get back into work and reconvened the West Midlands Mental Health Commission to agree new priorities, with the aim of securing new funding to expand our work in the region.	
Support our healthcare system	Personally lobbied for additional Government funding for healthcare in the West Midlands, such as the continued work on the new Midland Met Hospital, and new innovative projects like the West Midlands Health Tech Innovation Accelerator.	
Grow our social economy sector	Delivered the Commonwealth Games with the support of over 13,000 volunteers, who had opportunities to gain qualifications and work experience as part of the Games, and secured the £70 million Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund, and prioritised local community groups and charities to deliver the legacy benefits of the Commonwealth Games.	

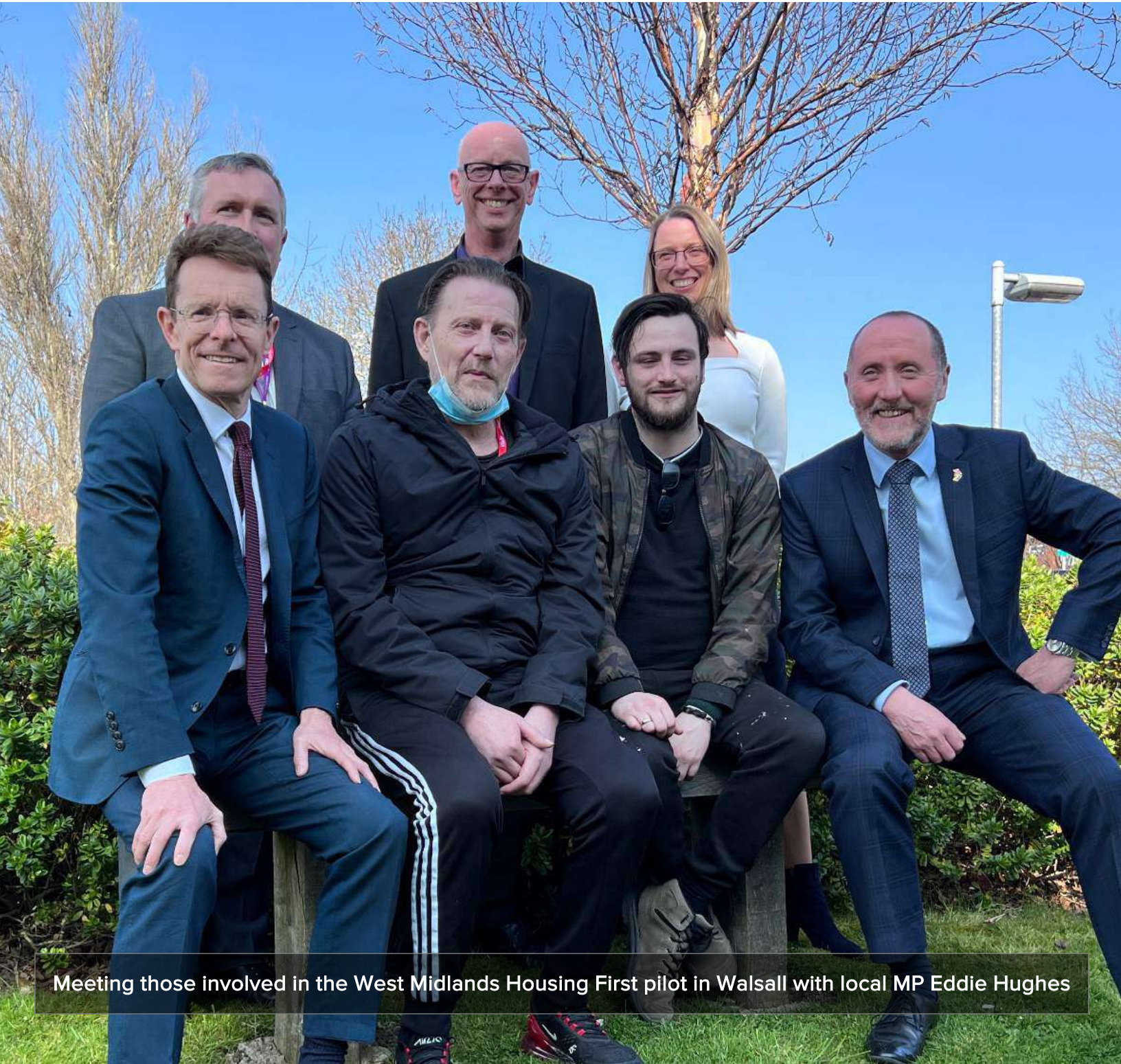
KEY COMMITMENTS: 2024-2028

Keep up our efforts to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping	Expand the Housing First scheme across the region by securing further funding, and use the new funding from the Affordable Homes Programme to triple the pace of social housebuilding in the region to roughly 1,700 per year by 2028.	
Support people with mental health issues	Grow our successful Thrive into Work, Thrive at Work and Thrive at College schemes, and implement the recommendations of the West Midlands Mental Health Commission.	
Improve health in the West Midlands	Increase the involvement of the Combined Authority in the Integrated Care Systems through the Health Equity Council, take a ‘Health in All’ approach to the WMCA’s work, revisit the	

proposal to give the WMCA a public health duty, and implement our joint health skills roadmap.

Support charities, volunteering and social enterprises

Make the most of the Commonwealth Games Legacy Fund to support charitable and community activities in the West Midlands, and strengthen and grow the social economy sector over the next four years, working through the recommendations of the Social Economy Taskforce.



Meeting those involved in the West Midlands Housing First pilot in Walsall with local MP Eddie Hughes

DESIGNING OUT HOMELESSNESS

Tackling homelessness has been an area where Combined Authority collaboration across the public, charity and private sectors has made a real impact. **As Mayor, I have kept up the focus on homelessness, working through the detailed causes to help people in the West Midlands who are affected by it.**

We have started to see some of the results of this work, with rough sleeper counts in the region down by 56% since 2018, and over 500 people benefitting from our intensive Housing First scheme. **But there is more to do, and if re-elected, I commit to continuing our efforts to ‘design out’ homelessness.**

Progress made:

- Housing First has proved a real success and has **helped over 500 people rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness**, and secured additional funding from the Government for it to continue.
- **Oversaw a reduction in the rough sleeper count from 169 in 2018 to 75 in 2023.**
- **Exceeded our target to deliver a minimum of 20% affordable homes in schemes funded by the WMCA** – currently at 33% of homes funded being affordable. As part of this we have enforced our more accurate definition of ‘affordable’, so it is based on people’s incomes.
- **Secured a commitment of up to £400 million of the Affordable Homes Programme** in the region with Homes England by 2026, with greater devolution of this funding after 2026.
- **Campaigned successfully for an increase in the level of Local Housing Allowance benefits at the 2023 Autumn Budget**, to help people at risk of homelessness and being driven into council-provided temporary accommodation.
- **Provided £9 million to social enterprise Cornerstone**, to acquire more properties to help families and others in desperate need of accommodation.
- **Taken a collaborative cross-party approach through the West Midland Homelessness Taskforce**, chaired by CEO of St. Basil’s, Jean Templeton - and involving local councillors of all parties from all areas of the region.
- **Won the case with Government to conduct a review into exempt accommodation**, with the committee hearing from lived experiences from across the West Midlands and committing to publish national standards and giving local and combined authorities the powers to enforce them.
- **Kicked off a pilot of a rent simplification pilot, to make it simpler to pay for supported accommodation for young people**, and begun to trial a new Live and Work scheme in Sandwell.
- **Supported the Change Into Action, the alternative giving scheme which we launched in 2017**, to channel public donations to tackle homelessness, which has now raised over **£280,000** across the region.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Expand our successful Housing First scheme by convincing Government to provide additional funding**, and **explore whether the Combined Authority could use its housing funds to provide new move-on accommodation** with specialist accommodation and support services, learning from the approaches of other cities and regions in the UK.
- **Use the new funding from the Affordable Homes Programme to triple the pace of social housebuilding in the region** from the current rate of 500-700 new homes per year started by Housing Associations in the Metropolitan WMCA area, to roughly 1,700 per year by 2028.

- **Maximise the Government investment of up to £400 million through the Affordable Homes Programme** in the region by 2026, and work with Housing Associations to substantially accelerate the rate of social housebuilding.
- **Secure full local devolution of Government affordable home funding after 2026**, to allow the WMCA to fund the development of new affordable housing schemes in the region.
- **Maintain the delivery of our minimum 20% affordable target** for WMCA-funded developments, directly funding new affordable homes for local residents.
- Partner with developers, local authorities and housing associations to **regenerate estates, providing better quality housing for existing residents, and increasing the number of homes** available.
- Identify **estate regeneration plans where this approach and Affordable Homes Programme funding could be applied**, such as the Ladywood regeneration in central Birmingham, Spon End in Coventry, Brockmoor in Dudley (building on the Net Zero Neighbourhood programme), Druids Heath in Birmingham, and Heath Town in Wolverhampton (for example the land around Heath Town Baths).
- **Make a success of the DWP rent simplification pilot and the Live and Work pilot**, and seek to roll these local schemes out to other areas and age groups as appropriate.
- **Keep partnering with charities and faith organisations in the housing and homelessness sector**, to continue ‘designing out’ homelessness together.
- Explore whether the WMCA could **support the development of new high-quality local providers of temporary accommodation and supported accommodation** in the region, potentially by partnering with an institutional investor such as L&G or Aviva.

TACKLING THE MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES THE REGION FACES

Thousands of people across the West Midlands face mental health issues, affecting their lives and those around them in profound ways. As a Combined Authority we have worked on schemes specifically designed to work with people where they are, for example Thrive at College, Thrive into Work and Thrive at Work.

This was one of the expert recommendations of the West Midlands Mental Health Commission who have guided our work throughout. I commit as Mayor to redoubling our efforts, and expanding our work to support those with mental health issues.

Progress made:

- **Secured further Government funding to support our Thrive into Work Individual Placement and Support scheme, which has helped over 1,000 people with long-term health conditions get back into work**, through providing specialists to work with people to identify suitable jobs and then support them with applications and interviews.
- **Committed £1 million of Combined Authority funding to the pilot Thrive at College scheme**, launched following a recommendation from the West Midlands Mental Health Commission to implement a whole-college approach to mental health, supporting zero exclusions and connecting students in need with NHS delivered mental health support teams.
- **Launched the Let's Chat initiative** which offers those most at risk from loneliness new opportunities for social interaction as well as help and advice on a range of topics, and **continued to support the Thrive at Work programme which supports businesses with helping their employees** with mental health issues, and rolled it out to over 500 organisations so far.
- **Used my role as Mayor to raise awareness of mental health issues, including the inaugural Baton of Hope tour to Birmingham**, to increase awareness of mental health in our region and to help instigate honest conversations around our mental health, **the This is Me campaign which encourages people to explain their personal experiences of mental health challenges**, and **launching the WMCA Mental Health Star Awards**, to celebrate the groundbreaking work being done across the region to improve mental health and wellbeing.
- **Reconvened the West Midlands Mental Health Commission to agree new priorities**, with the aim of securing new funding to expand our work in the region.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Launch new and innovative projects to support people in our region who are struggling with their mental health, and to continue growing our successful Thrive into Work and Thrive at Work schemes**, and further increase the number of trained mental health first aiders in the region.
- **Secure further funding from the Department for Work and Pensions to pilot new regional schemes** to support those with mental health conditions back into work, in particular intensive individual employment support for those furthest from the labour market.
- **Expand our Thrive at College scheme**, with the aim of reaching more colleges across the region, and secure further funding from Government.
- **Implement the recommendations of the West Midlands Mental Health Commission**, for example:
 - Work with schools and colleges to agree a 'whole school' approach to mental health, and reduce exclusions.
 - Develop and pilot new evidence-based parenting programmes in the region.

- Pilot integrated housing, financial and legal support alongside mental health services to help people address the circumstances which are worsening their mental health, along with the Integrated Care Systems.
- Expand physical activity opportunities and build them into treatment ‘pathways’.
- Develop and pilot tailored community-based mental health support for different marginalised communities within the West Midlands.

SUPPORTING WEST MIDLANDS VETERANS

We owe a debt of gratitude to those who have served our country in the Armed Forces. It is estimated that there are around 76,000 veterans in the West Midlands, and they face particular challenges for example with employment after their service. **That’s why as Mayor I’ve wanted to do all that I can to support veterans in the region.**

Progress made:

- **Signed the Armed Forces Covenant, and the Combined Authority has been awarded the Ministry of Defence’s Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award** for its commitment to supporting veterans and reservists within the organisation.
- **Commissioned the Designing Out Veterans Homelessness Report**, which examined the challenge of homelessness for veterans and gained commitments to the Veterans Pledges from partner organisations, to prevent the underlying causes of homelessness.
- **Organised the West Midlands Veterans’ Fair at Millennium Point in Birmingham** to help Armed Forces personnel or veterans who are seeking to transition into civilian employment
- **Worked with leading armed forces training provider MPCT to provide short 4-week military preparation courses** for those looking to join the armed forces.
- **Provided £9 million to social enterprise Cornerstone**, to acquire more properties to help homeless veterans and others in desperate need of accommodation.
- Secured Government support for **Birmingham bidding for the Invictus Games in 2027.**
- **Supported the National Caribbean Monument Charity with their campaign**, and broke ground with them on the new monument at the National Memorial Arboretum.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- Continue our skills training and employment work and intensify the support that we give to armed forces service members and leavers.
- Work with training and education providers in the West Midlands to encourage them to provide the **appropriate support for service leavers and to formally recognise and credit their experiences in the armed forces.**
- Work with the Forces Employment Charity on OP PROSPER, **the national wraparound employment service to support veterans into work** announced recently by Government.
- **Review Transport for West Midlands policies around free and concessionary travel for armed forces personnel and veterans**, in particular for those in receipt of compensation for injury as a result of their service, and provide free travel to veterans attending Remembrance Day events.
- **Win the opportunity to host the Invictus Games in Birmingham in 2027**, and make it an opportunity for the whole region to show their support for the Armed Services community.
- **Continue to support the work of the Royal British Legion and other armed forces community organisations.**

CAMPAIGNING FOR JUSTICE FOR THE TWENTY-ONE

The Birmingham Pub Bombings will never be forgotten by the people of this city. The search for justice for those who lost loved ones that day has gone on for far too long. This year we will commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of these atrocities, and yet we still do not have the answers.

That is why I have lobbied the last five Home Secretaries on this issue, and why if re-elected as Mayor, I will continue to advocate for Justice for the Twenty One:

- Keep pushing the Home Secretary, the Security Minister and the Prime Minister for **a full public inquiry into the Birmingham Pub Bombings**.
- Continue to **work alongside the Justice for the Twenty One (J421)** campaign group to seek justice, truth and accountability.
- Work with families to find and support the most appropriate way for them and for the region as a whole to **commemorate the fiftieth anniversary this year**.

IMPROVING HEALTH IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

The health of the people in the West Midlands is a critical factor in our success, and currently there are severe challenges facing us as a region. While health remains outside the formal areas of responsibility for the Combined Authority, as Mayor, I have sought to do what I can to improve access to high-quality healthcare and fuel innovation and scientific research.

Going forward, I believe the Combined Authority and Mayor should be more involved in this important area, working closely with the NHS through the Integrated Care Systems in the West Midlands. **As Mayor I will work collaboratively to improve the health of the region.**

Progress made:

- **Personally ensured Government intervention to save the Midland Met Hospital** following the collapse of Carillion, progress has been made and the hospital is due to open in autumn 2024, and supported successful campaigns for Government funding for the new ACAD at Heartlands, a new A&E in Walsall and the return of minor injuries unit to Solihull.
- **Supported the proposals for new Community Diagnostic Centres** in South Birmingham, Coventry, the Black Country, Chelmsley Wood and Washwood Heath, to boost capacity and help diagnose major illnesses faster.
- **Supported plans to create a new HealthTech campus** as part of the £3.2 billion Arden Cross scheme in Solihull, helping to create a centre of excellence to drive the digital health agenda and to create thousands of jobs.
- **Begun to implement the recommendations in the West Midlands Health of the Region report**, such as creating a lasting sporting legacy from the Commonwealth Games to support initiatives like 'Coventry Moves', which has brought 5,500 local people together for activities in public spaces and care homes across the city.
- **Championed the bid to Government to secure £14 million of funding for the West Midlands Health Tech Innovation Accelerator (WMHTIA)**, which aims to unite key players in universities, hospitals, industry to focus on addressing the challenges of bringing new medical and healthcare technologies into the UK market.
- **Secured £1.6 million of funding from the Health Foundation to host the Improving Health and Reducing Inequalities programme**, to get more people across the region benefiting from health creation through employment, transportation and housing.
- **Oversaw the completion of Phase 1 of the Birmingham Health Innovation Campus**, after securing Government funding and, supported the West Midlands HealthTech Accelerator, with an additional £14.5 million funding from the West Midlands Innovation Accelerator programme with Innovate UK.
- **Agreed a joint Regional Health Science and Care Services Training Plan with local education providers and the NHS**, with detailed plans for how people can train as nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapist, radiographer, pharmaceutical technicians, dental nurses, medical secretaries, and nurse associates.
- **Invested in public transport links to improve access to hospitals for staff and patients**, such as successfully opening the new University Station, improving the bus routes and cycle access around the Midlands Met Hospital in Sandwell, and extending the Binley cycleway to University Hospital in Coventry.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Increase the involvement of the Combined Authority in the Integrated Care Systems through the Health Equity Council, working together**, particularly on preventative health care efforts, and revisit the proposal to give the WMCA a public health duty.
- **Take a 'Health in All' approach to the WMCA's work**, release a second Health of the Region report, and **explore innovative ways to improve population health, address health disparities and prevent ill-health.**

- **implement our joint health skills roadmap with universities, colleges and NHS Trusts** to ensure that we are training enough healthcare professionals, for example by **providing new skills courses at Level 4 and higher**, working with colleges and the Institutes of Technology.
- **Work with the Integrated Care Systems and charities on specific health challenges for particular groups**, for example working with Marie Curie on the specific challenges for those receiving palliative care.
- **Continue to lobby for local hospitals and healthcare facilities**, such as improvements to the Birmingham Women's Hospital and Birmingham Children's Hospital, a new specialist cancer hospital in the region, and new theatre facilities in Solihull.
- Work with University of Birmingham, the University Hospital Birmingham, and a global investor to **deliver the UK's first Boron Neutron Capture Therapy specialist cancer hospital** in the West Midlands.
- **Support the new Midland Metropolitan University Hospital Learning Campus** in training up more healthcare professionals.
- Use the Birmingham Investment Zone to support the development of the **Aston University Birmingham Knowledge Quarter** with Bruntwood Sci-Tech, and **Curzon Wharf** with the Woodbourne Group, and secure commitment to develop Phase 2 of the **Birmingham Health Innovation Campus in Selly Oak**.
- **Lobby for new Government funding for med-tech priorities** such as the Clean Rooms for Advanced Therapy Medicinal Product, in vitro Diagnostics Demonstrator, Coventry & Warwickshire Deep Health Accelerator, Birmingham City South allied Health Professionals Campus and a Med-Tech Co-Investment Fund.
- **Strengthen our innovation work with the NHS across the region**, engaging as Mayor with the Integrated Care Boards and creating a structured partnership to drive forward these new technologies, building on the success of projects such as West Midlands 5G.



Robotic technology used for joint replacements at the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital in Northfield

BACKING THE REGION'S SOCIAL ECONOMY

The West Midlands thrives thanks to the hard work of charities, volunteers and social enterprises. From my time at John Lewis, I know the importance of having a social mission to an organisation, as well as financial considerations. **That's why I've worked hard as Mayor to support the social economy sector**, and to make sure the Combined Authority involves charities and social enterprises in its policy development and delivery wherever possible.

If re-elected I want to go even further, implementing the recommendations of the Social Economy Taskforce, and seeking to double the size of the social economy in the West Midlands. **We must be ambitious, and I will put the charities, volunteers and social enterprises at the heart of my plans as Mayor.**

Progress made:

- **Involved over 13,000 volunteers in the Commonwealth Games**, and made the most of the Games to provide new skills, qualifications and work experience to many of them.
- **Secured £12 million for the Inclusive Communities Fund, specifically for local community groups and charities** in the West Midlands.
- **Begun to deliver the recommendations of the Social Economy Taskforce**, such as engaging social enterprises, such as Cornerstone, in addressing homelessness, **providing £2 million in funding to support the social enterprise sector in the West Midlands** and launching the first Social Enterprise Cluster at Witton Lodge in Birmingham.
- **Delivered many of our policy priorities through grant-making schemes to local community groups and social enterprises to enable them to work with local people**, for example through the Better Streets Community Fund, Community Recovery Innovation Challenge grants, Community Green Grants fund, and the Cultural and Creative Social Enterprise project.
- **Worked closely with social enterprises and charities such as St. Basil's, Crisis and Cornerstone on the Combined Authority's top priorities** around homelessness.
- **Backed the work of our award-winning voluntary and charity organisations in the region including as a patron and ambassador**, for example joining MacMillan Cancer's coffee morning, taking part in St Basil's Big Birmingham Sleep Out, pounding the streets of the Great Birmingham Run for Cure Leukaemia and supporting the Acorns Hospice's 'Save our Hospice' appeal as a patron.
- **Set up the Social Economy Business Growth Programme as part of Business Growth West Midlands**, to provide grants, peer learning and one-to-one support to charities, social enterprises, community owned businesses and cooperatives.
- **Supported regional efforts to expand social prescribing**, such as supporting Solihull Council the pilot in North Solihull of social prescribing of walking and cycling initiatives.
- **Backed the West Midlands Social Economy Drive**, a week of workshops, networking, conferences to showcase the region's social enterprise sector.
- **Extend the annual Mayor's Community Weekend with new funding from the National Lottery Community Fund**, - and use the 2024 event to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the West Midlands region.
- **Championed the efforts of our amazing 14,000 volunteers** over the course of the Commonwealth Games who all did our region proud and **secured funding to create a permanent volunteering scheme in the West Midlands** as a legacy of the Games.

Plan for 2024-2028:








- **Make the most of the Commonwealth Games Legacy Fund to support charitable and community activities in the West Midlands.**
- **Strengthen and grow the social economy sector in the West Midlands over the next four years, working through the recommendations of the Social Economy Taskforce.**
- **Strengthen business support for social enterprises through Business Growth West Midlands, seeking to provide tailored support and grants.**
- **Seek to develop a new social impact investing fund, to fund work by social enterprises to tackle the region's most pressing challenges, such as climate change, homelessness and mental health.**
- **Explore whether the WMCA could support the development of new high-quality local providers of temporary accommodation and supported accommodation in the region, potentially by partnering with an institutional investor such as L&G or Aviva.**
- **Ensure that the billions of pounds being spent by the WMCA in the next few years, particularly on skills provision, housing and transport schemes, include opportunities for social enterprises to participate and provide social value to the region (such as new jobs or training for young people), and examine whether procurement processes needed tougher rules to ensure that local SMEs have a better chance of winning contracts.**









Re-opening the Acorn's Children's Hospice in Walsall following its refurbishment

MAKING SURE EVERYONE SHARES IN THE REGION'S SUCCESS

PROMISES KEPT: 2021-2024

Commitments	Action	Kept
Keep the cost to taxpayers low	No additional tax for West Midlands taxpayers for seven years in a row, and bus and Metro fares have been kept low.	
Give older people the support they need	Protected the free travel pass for pensioners, strengthened the West Midlands Ring & Ride service, and continued accessibility improvements for older people on public transport.	
Support the women of the West Midlands	Created thousands of targeted skills training opportunities specifically for women, launched the Women's Night Safety Charter to help protect women out in the West Midlands at night, committed to appointing a Women's Night Safety Champion to drive the charter forward.	
Back our region's thriving faith communities	Involved faith leaders advising and inputting into all areas of Combined Authority policy development and delivery, and included faith communities in the leadership of the region as partners.	
Make sure all our region's communities share in our success	Secured political agreement from the WMCA Board to the conclusions of the Race Equalities Taskforce, and have moved to implement the recommendations.	
Stand up for the LGBTQ+ community	Led the political campaign for HIV and hepatitis C opt-out testing in A&E departments, and encouraged sports and physical activity within the LGBTQ+ community.	
Support those with disabilities and long-term health conditions	Improved the accessibility of the transport network in the West Midlands, and supported the successful hosting of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, which had the largest ever fully integrated Paralympic sport programme.	

KEY COMMITMENTS: 2024-2028

Giving the older generation a great quality of life	Ensure that buses, trains and the Metro are made as accessible as possible to older people, protect the free travel pass, and commit to a long-term plan to protect and improve Ring & Ride services.	
Backing women across the West Midlands	Continue to provide tailored skills opportunities and training for women across the region, push for devolution of careers provision, so that we can support women in fulfilling their potential, and expand the reach of the Women's Night Safety Charter to get more businesses across the West Midlands to sign up.	
Putting faith into action with the communities across the region	Lead a bid to host the Parliament of World Religions in the West Midlands in 2027, and invite leading religious figures to champion our bid. Continue to develop the Faith Strategic Partnership, and increase engagement with faith groups, beyond the existing structures, for example exploring inviting a faith representative to become a formal observer member of the Combined Authority Board.	
Giving all our communities the chance to succeed in the West Midlands	Implement the recommendations of the Race Forward report of the Taskforce, for example develop targeted pathways from school to careers.	
Being a vocal champion of the LGBTQ+ community	Prioritise tackling homophobic and transphobic hate crimes on public transport, and always stand up for equality in the region and speak up against all forms of intolerance against the LGBTQ+ community.	
Addressing issues faced by those with disabilities and long-term health conditions	Keep up our work on transport accessibility, continue the Include Me West Midlands approach to become a disabled friendly region, including setting a new target to reduce the disability pay gap in the region.	

TACKLING THE COST OF LIVING IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

We were the fastest growing regional economy in the UK, but since 2019, the region has been buffeted by economic headwinds. Firstly, the COVID-19 pandemic, then persistent inflation: the cost of a family shop going up, high energy prices, hiked rents and higher rates amongst other challenges. Clearly these have national and international causes, but **as Mayor I have endeavoured to do whatever I can to help people in the West Midlands with their finances.**

1. **Zero Mayoral tax:** No additional tax for West Midlands taxpayers for seven years in a row, unlike the mayors in Manchester and London who have all charged extra mayoral taxes.
2. **Key bus fares are lower than 2017 and remain the cheapest city-region in the UK.** We have protected extra discounts and free travel for those who need it most such as young people, older people, and jobseekers.
3. **Metro fares have been kept low** since we brought Midlands Metro back into public ownership, and fare capping has been introduced across the network.
4. **Keeping the costs of the Combined Authority low:** for example, as Mayor not taking a proposed pay rise, keeping the same salary as when I was first elected in 2017.
5. **Brought in £10 billion extra funding from Government over the last seven years:** which has allowed us to for example hold local council contributions to the Combined Authority down, so they can focus their funding for services for local people.
6. **Pressured the Government to provide financial support:** for example furlough support during COVID, the capping of energy prices, increasing benefits by inflation, and the increase in Local Housing Allowance levels.
7. **Set up the £24 million Business Energy Advice service** to offer businesses a free energy audit and then the potential to apply for up to £100,000 of match funding towards the cost of the recommended measures.
8. **Long-term plan to create well-paid jobs:** Our work to attract new companies and help local companies to grow in the sectors of the future such as digital technology, professional services, the creative industries, advanced manufacturing and green technologies, sets the West Midlands up to create thousands well-paid jobs in the long term.
9. **Providing training to boost incomes:** Where people want to get higher paid jobs and need a new qualification to do so, we have provided training and support, and where people have needed to retrain due to their circumstances, and we are the only region in the country to make training free for those on low incomes.
10. **Overseen a reduction the proportion of jobs with an hourly wage below the Living Wage** from 23.7% of jobs in 2017 to 14.2% by April 2023 (across the wider West Midlands region).

We are beginning to see encouraging signs, for example the number of people in low-paid jobs has dropped significantly, and inflation is starting to come down. **But we can't let up. People are finding their finances tight, and a lack of rigour, competence and discipline by the wrong local politicians can hit local people hard.**



Meeting local residents out and about in the region

GIVING THE OLDER GENERATION A GREAT QUALITY OF LIFE

Ensuring older people have a great quality of life is vital for our society, and I as Mayor have been committed to supporting that mission. Through the mayoral responsibility for transport, I have committed to making the public transport system as easy to access as possible, and supported the Ride & Ride services which are so important to so many people. We have also found other opportunities to support older people, for example exploring the possibilities of new technology like 5G in healthcare. **The West Midlands should be proud to be a great place for older people to live.**

Progress made:

- **Protected the free travel pass for pensioners** to allow older people to travel around our region more easily.
- **Strengthened the West Midlands Ring & Ride service**, which provides the vital ability to get out and about to people who are unable to use the public transport network, and explored new types of demand-responsive services.
- **Continued accessibility improvements for older people on public transport**, such as the new all electric fleet on the line connecting Wolverhampton, Walsall and Birmingham having flat boarding and accessible toilets and ensuring better accessibility at new rail stations such as University Station.
- **Promoted the use of innovative new medical technologies to support elderly people across the region**, such as the trial of using 5G monitoring devices to monitor the routines of residents in a Merry Hill care home to remotely signal to staff when a resident may have been taken ill or had a fall.
- **Successfully lobbied the Government to provide financial support to residents struggling to afford energy prices during the cost of living crisis**, with every household in the region receiving a £400 discount on their energy bills over the winter months.
- **Begun a programme of retrofitting homes to make them more energy efficient and reduce energy bills**, starting with 300 homes in Elmdon and Foleshill.
- **Successfully ran the Mayor's Intergenerational Cricket Cup** to bring together players of all ages from diverse communities across the West Midlands.
- **Campaigned successfully against the closure of ticket offices** at rail stations across the region, to ensure our older people are able to access any support and assistance they may need regarding their travel arrangements.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Protect the free travel pass, improve accessibility on all modes of transport for older people**, and commit to a long-term plan to protect and improve Ring & Ride services.
- **Continue funding innovative technology such as 5G which can support in-home care**, and improve NHS services in the region.
- **Make public transport as accessible as possible for older people**, for example improving low-floor bus services, level-boarding on trains and waiting areas in rail stations and bus interchanges.
- **Make major improvements to our local centres and high streets, accelerated in the Black Country by appointing a new Regeneration Commissioner**, and strengthen the cultural offer in the region.

BACKING WOMEN ACROSS THE WEST MIDLANDS

Women in the West Midlands face specific challenges, which can hold them back in their lives, their careers with their aspirations. We ought to be a region where gender is not a barrier to success, and we have made a good start in the last few years. **As Mayor, I have listened to what is needed, and steered our activities and resources to support women. I will continue to champion and empower women as Mayor.**

Progress made:

- **Created thousands of targeted skills training opportunities specifically for women**, including providing funding to support Aaina to deliver specialist skills training in Walsall for local women and their families, supporting bootcamp provider NIYO, partnering with Coventry University to deliver more digital skills training for over 50's women, and collaborating closely with the University of Birmingham to offer £4,000 Women in Tech scholarships to give women across the region access to our coding bootcamps.
- **Championed successful efforts to make the Commonwealth Games the most gender equal major sporting event**, with more medal events for women and the debut of women's cricket as an event at Edgbaston.
- **Commit to new night bus services** to allow everyone to get home after a night out, and seek to extend the hours of rail and Metro services.
- **Launched the Women's Night Safety Charter to help protect women out in the West Midlands at night** with over 80 businesses already signed up and committed to appointing a Women's Night Safety Champion to drive the charter forward.
- **Continued commitment as Mayor not to speak on all-male panels**, instead encouraged organisers to find suitable speakers amongst the talented women in the region.
- **Promoted efforts across the region to encourage women to take up active modes of travel**, such as supporting the work of the Saheli Hub in Birmingham which has taught over 3,000 women of all ages how to cycle.
- **Successfully secured funding from Government to expand our public transport safety team and recruit new officers specially trained and dedicated to tackling incidents involving women's safety.**
- **Championed a gender balanced Combined Authority workforce**, which was recognised with the WMCA being named as one of the UK's top employers for women, and made progress on closing the gender pay gap within the organisation.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Continue to provide tailored skills opportunities and training for women across the region**, with colleges and training providers to proactively encourage to take up these opportunities, and push for devolution of careers provision, so that we can support women in the West Midlands in fulfilling their potential.
- **Expand the reach of the Women's Night Safety Charter to get more businesses across the West Midlands to sign up and to lobby Government for further funding** to boost the efforts of the region's business improvement districts in implementing the safety measures.
- **Continue to deploy specialist Transport Safety Officers across the region**, to boost efforts to tackle violence against women and girls.
- **Continue to work with Council Leaders and Combined Authority structures to increase the number of female and ethnic minority representatives on the Board**, and on all Combined Authority decision-making bodies.
- **Ensure our Thrive mental health programme is tailored to provide specific support for women and girls in our region**, addressing issues such as transport safety, period poverty and safety in the workplace.
- **Support efforts to encourage women to stand for public office (such as to become an MP or Councillor) in the West Midlands, working cross-party.**

- Support the efforts of industry groups across the region to ensure women are central to all growth across the region, such as collaborating closely with organisations such as the Fawcett Society and the West Midlands Women's Voice to ensure equality is at the forefront of all Combined Authority decisions.



Supporting the International Women's Day Conference & Expo at Millennium Point

PUTTING FAITH INTO ACTION WITH THE COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE REGION

Faith is too often ignored by politicians and leaders, which is a huge missed opportunity, because for many people it is one of the most important things in their life. Our region has a wealth of different faith communities, many of whom are active in service to their local community. I have seen many examples of generosity, hospitality, selflessness and compassion from our faith groups. **As Mayor, I have been committed to including faith communities in the leadership of the region as partners, and if re-elected I will continue to deepen this joint work.**

Progress made:

- **Brought together the Faith Strategic Partnership Group of faith leaders** from the region, to advise and input into all areas of Combined Authority policy development and delivery.
- **Brought over 250 representatives from West Midlands faith communities together through our latest Faith in Action Summit**, which committed to work together on key West Midlands priorities: the economy, homelessness, mental health awareness, healthy and active communities and empowering our young people.
- **Supported efforts to promote the role of faith groups in helping to tackle homelessness across the region**, such as holding specific workshops to engage different faith groups to get them involved in the process.
- **Continued to champion and celebrate religious festivals** by hosting and supporting public events to celebrate festivals such as Christmas, Diwali, Vaisakhi, Eid and Holi
- **Ensured the WMCA became the first Combined Authority to sign up to the Faith Covenant**, a joint commitment by faith communities, local authorities and other stakeholders to a set of principles that promote open, practical working on all levels.
- **Helped to bring together faith and community leaders with the Commonwealth Games leadership team**, to ensure all voices were heard in efforts to make the games as culturally diverse as possible.
- **Continued to take a zero tolerance stance to discrimination across all the work of the Combined Authority.**

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Lead a bid to host the Parliament of World Religions in the West Midlands in 2027**, and to invite leading religious figures to champion our bid such as the Archbishop of Canterbury and King Charles.
- **Deepen the role of faith leaders in the work of the Combined Authority, building on the success of the Faith Strategic Partnership Group**, for example inviting a faith representative to become a formal observer member of the Combined Authority Board.
- **Act as a champion to support and promote the fantastic work done by faith voluntary organisations** that are tackling some of the region's challenges like homelessness and poverty, such as Langar Aid, Islamic Relief and many others.
- Continue to **celebrate religious festivals with different faith groups as Mayor**, hosting and support civic events as appropriate.
- **Remain committed to a zero tolerance policy towards religious hate crime**, and enforcing this on the public transport network.



Speaking at a Community Iftar event in Sutton Coldfield at the Masjid

GIVING ALL OUR COMMUNITIES THE CHANCE TO SUCCEED IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

The West Midlands is one of the most diverse city-regions in the world. We have people from all over the world living here, and that strengthens us as a region. However, we must make sure that all communities get the chance to succeed here. I have worked to be an inclusive Mayor, working with all the communities in the region for the benefit of all. **If we are to thrive in the twenty-first century, we need to make sure that everyone feels a part of the success of the West Midlands.**

Progress made:

- **Successfully set up the Race Equalities Taskforce to address the specific issues facing under-represented communities**, in policy areas like transport, skills, jobs and housing, and **secured agreement to the recommendations of the Race Forward report of the Taskforce** through the Combined Authority Board and began implementation.
- **Secured the £20 million Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund to support inclusive communities across the region**, and prioritised gifting the sports equipment used during the games to grassroots organisations across the region that support under-represented groups.
- **Continued our support for English language teaching to those who need it**, making courses free for those on low incomes, and since 2019 we have seen a 14% increase in participation in these Community Learning courses.
- **Secured funding from Government through the Deeper Devolution Deal to launch Growth Zones across the region**, this entails a commitment to prioritise regeneration in these areas, such as East Birmingham, through the creation of new jobs and the building of thousands of new homes.
- **Championed the first national Black Talent awards**, helping to recognise achievement and role models to whom our young people can engage with for support and advice.
- **Work with international experts at our universities on delivering West Midlands priorities**, such as with Professor Monder Ram and CREME on encouraging ethnic minority entrepreneurship, committing to set up business hubs in community locations.
- **Provide support and training for community organisations to develop and professionalise**, through the work of the Social Economy Taskforce, including mentoring by successful established organisations such as Witton Lodge.
- **Continued to run and support events at community venues to connect young people with jobs and training opportunities**, and **worked with youth outreach workers from First Class Legacy to put on careers training and other activities for young people.**
- **Provided funding to support the creation of a Caribbean War Memorial**, as well as attending the service at the National Arboretum Museum where the foundation stone for the memorial was laid down.
- **Championed a diverse and inclusive Combined Authority workforce**, and made progress on closing the race pay gap within the organisation.
- **Successfully ran the Mayor's Intergenerational Cricket Cup** to bring together players of all ages from diverse communities across the West Midlands.
- **Continued to support the Mayor's Community Weekend**, which provides small grant funding (up to £500) for local community groups to run hundreds of events to bring our diverse communities together once a year over one weekend in the West Midlands, in association with the National Lottery Community Fund.
- **Led successful trade missions to both India and Bangladesh** and helped to strengthen ties with countries with strong regional links, and continued to campaign for new direct flights.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Implement the recommendations of the Race Forward report of the Taskforce**, for example develop targeted **pathways from school to careers** that are designed to address the barriers that young people who experience race inequality face, and tackle underemployment by creating a new task and finish group.
- **Implement the WMCA's 'Health in All Policies' approach**, focusing on integrating health support for racialised minorities into housing, transport, skills and environmental policies.
- **Expand the Black Thrive scheme** to offer culturally sensitive counselling support and resilience training to ethnic minority staff within more Thrive at Work businesses.
- **Secure funding to continue to run the Mayor's Community Weekend**, and to ensure funding allocation is equal and representative of the diversity of our region.
- **Remain committed to a zero tolerance policy towards racial hate crime on the public transport network.**
- **Continue to support efforts to bring more ethnic minority candidates into politics** by training and encouraging candidates for Parliament and councils.
- **Hold a second West Midlands Leadership Commission inquiry** to review progress and agree new priorities.



Meeting Mr Handsworth and his exercise class at Handsworth Library

BEING A VOCAL CHAMPION OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

As Mayor, I have been a passionate advocate of the thriving LGBTQ+ community here, and I have stood up against hate and prejudice wherever it has come from. Society has moved positively forward on LGBTQ+ issues, but we must not take the progress we have made for granted. Everyone in this region must respect everyone else, irrespective of their faith or sexuality or ethnicity. I will continue to be a Mayor who defends the principle of equal respect for every individual.

Progress made:

- **Led the political campaign for HIV and hepatitis opt-out testing in A&E departments** across the West Midlands working closely with the Terrence Higgins Trust.
- **Supported the Pride House at the Birmingham Commonwealth Games in 2022**, commissioned a report by Pride Sport and the Midland Pride Network into the barriers and opportunities for LGBTQ+ to take part in organised sport and physical activity.
- **Spoke out against the homophobic attacks within the Gay Village in Birmingham** and continued to **stand up for the importance of appropriate personal social and health education** in schools.
- **Continued to run anti-hate crime campaigns across the public transport network**, working with West Midlands Police and charities like True Vision.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Prioritise tackling homophobic and transphobic hate crimes on public transport** and press the Police and Crime Commissioner to provide more support for victims of hate crime and to improve reporting to ensure incidents can be punished.
- **Stand up for a tolerant and equal region, and fight against any intolerance against the LGBTQ+ community.**
- **Act as a champion to support and promote the excellent work done by charity organisations to support LGBTQ+ people across the region.**
- **Keep championing Pride in Wolverhampton and Birmingham as Mayor.**



Celebrating Pride in Centenary Square in Birmingham

ADDRESSING ISSUES FACED BY THOSE WITH DISABILITIES AND LONG-TERM HEALTH CONDITIONS

To succeed as a region, we need to make sure that everyone in the region can succeed, including those with disabilities and long-term health conditions. We do this through a region approach, known as Include Me West Midlands to make the West Midlands an exemplar region for engaging disabled people and those with long term health conditions. **There's more to be done, and as Mayor I pledge to continue to support this important work.**

Progress made:





- **Supported the successful hosting of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, which had the largest fully integrated Paralympic sport programme in Commonwealth Games history, with 42 different events running across 8 sports, and sponsored the World Blind Games at the University of Birmingham.**
- **Continued the Include Me West Midlands approach to supporting disabled people and those with health conditions, engaging with them directly through citizens panels.**
- **Campaigned against the proposed closures of ticket offices across the region, which if enacted would have meant disabled passengers would be unable to receive the support they need at stations.**
- **Improve the Ring & Ride accessibility services for people who need it, and explore further joint work with councils on accessible transport for those with learning difficulties or disabilities, particularly where those services are at risk due to Birmingham City Council's financial situation.**
- **Championed the efforts of businesses across the region committed to employing disabled people, such as Nuneaton Signs who have 69% of their workforce having a registered disability.**
- **Backed community initiatives to help disabled people to get into the sport, with Warwickshire Cricket Club running a table cricket tournament for disabled children across the region, with the finals being held at Edgbaston.**
- **Championed active travel across the region and helped to prevent many long term health conditions, through overseeing the largest regional rise in cycling across the UK, boosted by our various schemes across the region such as the mobility credits scheme to incentivise switching from a car to a new bike.**
- **Became the first Mayor to sign the Accessible Transport Charter and continued to make sure the transport network is as accessible as possible for people with disabilities, for example by ensuring high-quality disabled access at all new rail stations, improving accessibility at existing stations, rolling out audio announcements on public transport, and offering free travel through the Disabled Person's Travel Pass.**
- **Agreed to the West Midlands Bus Passenger Charter, with its commitments to supporting disabled passengers including ensuring all staff are trained to provide support to any passengers who need help, making all buses in the West Midlands wheelchair accessible and providing timetable information in alternative formats on request.**

Plan for 2024-2028:





- **Continue the Include Me West Midlands approach to become a disabled friendly region, including setting a new target to reduce the disability pay gap in the region.**
- **Commit to a long-term plan to protect and improve Ring & Ride services,** including reviewing whether council-provided accessible transport for those with learning difficulties or disabilities should be managed jointly, particularly where those services are at risk due to Birmingham City Council's financial situation.
- **Ensure that all the new transport infrastructure build as part of our 2040 Transport Plan is designed with accessibility in mind, and takes into account the local pavements and routes to get to bus stops, train stations and Metro stops.**
- **Continue to provide skills and employment programmes which are tailored to the needs of those with disabilities,** working with the specialist colleges in the region and training providers.
- **Improve the representation of disabled people within the Combined Authority organisation and decision-making bodies.**
- **Act as a champion for active well-being programmes for disabled people in the region,** by seeking to capitalise on the legacy of the Commonwealth Games through greater partnerships with paralympic sports bodies such as UK Deaf Sport.

WINNING THE BEST DEAL FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS

PROMISES KEPT: 2021-2024

Commitments	Action	Kept
"Secure new investment" from Government and the private sector	Secured £10 billion of new investment from Government since 2017 , with recent wins across housing, transport, digital and economic growth projects.	
Ensure there is "no additional burden on local residents"	No Mayoral council tax precept since 2017 as Mayor, and no use of business rates supplement as promised in my last Renewal Plan.	
"Long-term benefits from the Commonwealth Games for residents in the West Midlands"	Retained £70 million of underspent funding from the Commonwealth Games to spend on local legacy projects in the region , rather than sending it back to London.	
"Seek a new financial settlement for the region"	Agreed the landmark 'Deeper Devolution Deal' , with over £1.5 billion of new funding for the West Midlands , and confirmation that the West Midlands will have a single settlement at the next spending review, which will be controlled by local leaders.	

KEY COMMITMENTS: 2024-2028

Build on our funding success with Government	Keep up our momentum in winning new funding from Government, and secure as large a single settlement as possible at the next spending review.	
Maintain our position as the leading inward investment region outside London	Keep on attracting major new inward investments in sectors the West Midlands has existing strengths in, and support local centres, particularly in the Black Country in raising their profile and attracting national and international companies.	
Protect local taxpayers	Keep the cost of the Mayoralty low, with a track record of no mayoral tax for seven years running, and no intention of implementing one in the future.	
Commit to cross-party collaborative leadership for the West Midlands	Maintain the collaborative, consensus-based, constructive spirit of the Combined Authority , and work with other Mayors such as Andy Burnham, particularly on important regional issues like HS2.	



Showing Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt the progress in Birmingham City Centre



Welcoming Levelling Up Secretary Michael Gove to the Caparo site in Walsall

RETAIN TRUST AND KEEP THE FUNDING FLOWING FROM GOVERNMENT TO THE WEST MIDLANDS

Our renewal plans are ambitious and require us to secure new funding for the region. I have a track record of securing new funding from the Government and attracting new investment from the private sector.

Attracting new funding is one of the most important parts of the job of Mayor, and it is crucial the region continues to have this credible leadership.



We have worked very hard to build a level of trust with civil servants, ministers, and investors by presenting serious practical plans, and then delivering on them. We must not let the region take a step backwards to where we now see Birmingham City Council – and lose out on the funding to transform our region. As Mayor, I will always use my business background, my relationships, and a cross-party approach to deliver new investment in the region.

Progress made:

- **Increased the total funding secured from Government to £10 billion since I became Mayor in 2017, including increasing the transport capital budget by over ten times from £38 million (2016/17) to an average of £407 million in the next few years.**
- **Developed innovative financing methods to back our region's business and regeneration projects, for example:**
 - **Launched a new West Midlands Co-Investment Fund**, using money from the WMCA, the West Midlands Pension Fund and private investors to invest in high-growth potential SMEs.
 - **Agreed investment partnerships to commit private sector cash to projects in the West Midlands**, with major pension fund L&G (£4 billion) and developer Segro (£2 billion).
- **Agreed and delivered balanced and sustainable budgets with the WMCA Board every year as Mayor**, maintaining consensus despite the challenging financial background for local authorities.
- **Delivered the regional elements of the Commonwealth Games on time and under budget**, allowing £70 million of underspend to be used for legacy projects in the region.

£10 BILLION OF NEW FUNDING SINCE ANDY STREET BECAME MAYOR, WITH RECENT WINS ACROSS THE BOARD

Key asks		Recent wins
New single settlement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed as part of the Deeper Devolution Deal, starting in the next spending review period, giving the region control over how we spend our money.
Affordable housing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to £400 million new public and private funding for new affordable homes as part of the Deeper Devolution Deal.
Brownfield remediation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An additional £100 million agreed with Government in the Deeper Devolution Deal.
Town centres		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £1 billion in funding for town and city centre regeneration, including funding from the WMCA and new funding secured by local authorities with mayoral support.
Growth Zones & Investment Zone		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business rates retention worth at least £500 million. Will bring billions of private investment into the region.
5G & Digital		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £4 million to boost productivity in manufacturing and smart communities, £2.4 million additional funding for WM5G to develop Open RAN solutions, and £10 million to create the UK Telecoms Innovation Network. £4 million to help those excluded from digital to benefit from new technology.
Commonwealth Games underspend		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional £70 million in funding for culture, sport and legacy projects, because the West Midlands delivered the Commonwealth Games on time, and with money left over.
Business rates retention		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ten years of business rates retention growth guaranteed, worth £45 million per year to the region.
Buses		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured £88 million for the West Midlands Bus Service Improvement Plan.
Cycling & Walking		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Around £50 million additional grant funding secured from Government for active travel schemes since 2020.

Metro & rail		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further £60 million to secure Metro extension to Brierley Hill.
Transport funding		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1.75 billion secured for the Midland Rail Hub, and increased the transport capital budget by over ten times from £38 million (2016/17) to an average of £407 million in the next few years.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Build on our success of bidding into Government for new funding** for the region, and secure as large a single settlement as possible at the next spending review.
- **Ensure that the fiscal devolution commitments made in the Deeper Devolution are fully realised by Government at the next Spending Review**, such as the commitment to a single funding settlement for the WMCA, devolution of affordable homes and retrofit funding.
- **Seek additional commitments to devolve central Government funding to the WMCA**, such as for R&D and innovation, employment support, trade and investment, public service reform and careers advice.
- **Keep the cost of the Mayoralty low**, with a track record of no mayoral tax for seven years running, and no intention of implementing one in the future.
- **Keep exploring potential for more devolution of fiscal powers**, for example devolution of Stamp Duty, Vehicle Excise Duty, Air Passenger Duty or a share of income tax or VAT collected in the region.
- **Champion our region to UK and overseas investors to continue our success at attracting new funding** for construction and business projects, providing new jobs for local residents in the region - and **seek new Government funding to incentivise inward investment** in the long-term.
- Work with investors and financial institutions to **develop a financial model for the mass retrofit of homes** across the West Midlands, and look at options for individuals to take out **Green Loans to fund retrofit in their homes** which will save them long-term on their energy bills.
- **Lobby Government for a full review of business rates**, to help high street and small businesses as they compete with online businesses, and to help public authorities to balance their budgets so they can provide services to residents.

SECURING THE POWER TO DECIDE ON LOCAL ISSUES OURSELVES

The UK is one of the most centralised countries in the world, with powers and funding being held in London and not controlled by local regions. The regions of Germany, France and the states and cities of America have far more control of their own resources. Building on our series of successful Devolution Deals with Government, **we must go further to take back more responsibility for our own affairs in the West Midlands.**

Devolution means we can direct our resources to where they are most needed, based on local knowledge of our area. For example, in the West Midlands we have used the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement to prioritise local transport schemes ourselves, rather than apply to Whitehall for approval. With growing confidence, **the West Midlands must seize the initiative, and secure more powers and funding to bring growth and prosperity to the region.**

Progress made:

- **Secured a new Deeper Devolution Deal in March 2023**, worth up to £1.5 billion to the region with substantial new powers, following a successful series of Devolution Deals since elected Mayor in May 2017.

DEVOLUTION DEALS WITH ANDY STREET

West Midlands Devolution Deal – November 2015

This devolution deal in 2015 was the original agreement to form the Combined Authority. Andy Street was Chair of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership and a signatory to this first agreement.

- Regional control over skills, housing, transport with responsibility for economic growth
- Set up the Combined Authority and created the role of Mayor
- Package of potential funding including gainshare funding and business rates growth retention over thirty years

West Midlands Devolution Deal 2 – November 2017

Andy Street was elected Mayor in May 2017, and by November had secured a second devolution deal with the Government:

- £250 million of funding for transport infrastructure, in particular for the Metro Extension from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill

West Midlands Housing Deal – March 2018

The next focus was securing the funding to accelerate housebuilding in the region, with new funding to enable sites and to clean up brownfield land:

- Target of 215,000 new homes by 2030/31
- £250 million of Housing Infrastructure Fund, including major housing development and regeneration of Perry Barr
- New Land Fund of £100 million brownfield remediation funding, to acquire land including in the Walsall to Wolverhampton corridor

West Midlands Skills Agreement – July 2018

Building on the devolution of the adult education budget in the first Devolution Deal, the Skills Deal provided additional funding and responsibilities to train up local people for work:

- Set up the Apprenticeship Levy retention fund, which secured an additional £47.6 million in funding for 4,000 apprenticeships in 683 small and medium sized businesses in the West Midlands by January 2024.
- Additional £5 million funding for retraining and £2 million more for careers hubs and education technology

Formal Devolution of the Adult Education Budget – November 2018

The Order to formally transfer the £126 million Adult Education Budget into Combined Authority control was made in Parliament, with responsibility transferring in August 2019.

Sustainable City Region Transport Settlement – April 2022

The Sustainable City Region Transport Settlement evolved out of the earlier Transforming Cities Fund (set up in 2017), and provides substantial financial muscle to the WMCA to transform our local transport network:

- £1.05 billion settlement to fund new transport infrastructure through to 2027, with the region setting its own priorities to spend the funding.
- This new funding has been committed to new rail stations, expanding the Metro, bus routes, active travel and very light rail schemes.

West Midlands Deeper Devolution Deal – March 2023

After months of negotiation, the Government announced the Deeper Devolution Deal with the West Midlands in March 2023. This agreement commits to a single funding settlement from the next Spending

Review, and before then grants over £1.5 billion of new funding to the region:

- Up to £500 million for a new housing deal, including funds for brownfield clean up and affordable housing.
- Confirmation of the retention of any business rates growth for the next ten years – worth an estimated £45 million per year.
- Growth Zones, backed by 25-year business rate retention, which could raise an additional £1.7 billion for the region, and Investment Zones, also backed by 25-year business rate retention, which could bring in £5.5 billion investment into the region.
- A new £4 million funding to tackle digital exclusion in the region, by rolling out high speed broadband and providing devices and data to those who need them.
- Devolution of the bus service operator grant (BSOG) so that the Mayor and Transport for West Midlands can improve bus services in the region.
- New flexibilities and powers over post-19 skills funding to make sure that adult learners can access the training they need.

City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement 2 - October 2023

In order to top up the transport infrastructure funding available to city-regions, the Government announced further funding in the CRSTS2 settlement.

- WMCA allocation was over £2.6 billion, with local control over what transport infrastructure projects it is spent on.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Set up an expert commission to review the devolution of powers related to planning, land, development and housebuilding** (West Midlands Land Commission 2), including:
 - Explore further use of Mayoral Compulsory Purchase Powers and Mayoral Development Corporations.
 - Explore the pros and cons of having a regional spatial strategy.
 - Review Levelling Up and Regeneration Act powers such as High Street Rental Auction to see which could accelerate regeneration in the West Midlands.
 - Explore further devolution of Homes England powers and Government property holdings to the WMCA.
- Commission a **detailed benchmarking study of the powers of the West Midlands Mayoralty and the West Midlands Combined Authority** compared to London and other international mayoral models, to inform future discussions with Government about devolution.
- **Secure the planned devolution committed to by Government in the Deeper Devolution Deal in the coming years**, for example the single settlement at the next spending review and the full devolution of the affordable housing after 2026.
- **Push for further devolution of post-16 technical education and full control over careers & employment programmes**, so that our training and skills system matches the types of jobs people go into in the West Midlands.
- **Propose that the power to grant Transport and Works Act Orders within the constituent area of the Combined Authority is devolved to the Mayor from the Secretary of State**, in order to speed up the approval and construction of new transport infrastructure schemes.
- **Seek new powers and control to co-ordinate our industrial strategy and drive the economic growth** of the region, including more control over:
 - Government research and development funding UKRI
 - Industrial strategy and State Aid support funding from the Department for Business and Trade
 - Trade & inward investment support funding and teams
 - Local area energy planning and energy funding
- **Work with Government to identify opportunities where additional funding can be secured to allow public service reform**, for example councils working together to deliver shared services across the region, or capital investment in new digital tools to make local government more efficient, including in health.



Discussing new investment in the region with Harvey Norman CEO, Katie Page

A COMPETENT COMBINED AUTHORITY SERVING THE PEOPLE OF THE WEST MIDLANDS

The Combined Authority was set up as a joint venture between the local authorities in the West Midlands and local business organisations in 2015. In just a few years, it has gone from being a fast-growing start-up to a large organisation, which budgets of hundreds of millions of pounds each year. From my time working at John Lewis, I know how important it is that the organisation itself functions properly. **Without the right people, systems and process, you simply won't get the results.**

Eight years after the foundation of the Combined Authority, we can be proud of what we have achieved. But the third mayoral term is an appropriate moment in time to review the organisation and how we do business. **If re-elected, I will take the same detailed, hands-on approach to running the West Midlands Combined Authority as I have done so far**, and I will review the structures to make sure that we are delivering excellence and good value for money that residents rightly expect.

Progress made:

- **Committed to an intensive public schedule of public meetings, visits and events in all the boroughs of the West Midlands**, making myself available as Mayor to listen to local people's views.
- **Continued my collective approach to regional leadership**, working with local authorities and councillors from across the political divide, and with local businesses, civic groups and social enterprises
- **Empowered expert commissioners from the private sector** to drive progress in critical areas such as Cycling & Walking and growing the region's tech industry.
- **Overseen an improved standard of Combined Authority and Transport for West Midlands communications**, for example the travel updates from the Regional Transport Control Centre, and the excellent spectator travel communications during the Commonwealth Games.
- **Ensured a continued commitment to transparency by the Mayor's Office**, making any meetings with companies and interest groups, and expenses incurred as part of doing the job of Mayor available for public scrutiny.
- **Kept the costs of the Mayor's office as low as possible**, with **no additional Mayoral council tax at all since 2017** unlike other Mayors elsewhere in the country, and **turned down a pay rise, keeping the same salary as Mayor as in 2017.**
- **Teamed up with other Mayors across the country, such as Andy Burnham, the Labour Mayor for Greater Manchester**, to make the case on shared causes such as the construction of the High Speed 2 rail line.

Plan for 2024-2028:

- **Make our money go further by being more efficient**, for example finding opportunities for local authorities and the Combined Authority to work together, sharing resources and reducing costs.
- **Search for the best candidates from across the West Midlands, the UK and the world**, particularly for any senior vacancies (Director-level and above) within the WMCA, so that we can secure the best people to serve the people of the region, and pay them as necessary to attract the very best.
- **Maintain the collaborative, consensus-based, constructive spirit of the Combined Authority**, working with and respecting local council leaders from all parties for the benefit of the people of the West Midlands.
- **Lead the region in a cross-party way**, working with other Mayors through the M10 group of mayors, and with West Midlands MPs from both main parties, particularly on important regional issues like HS2.
- **Keep my commitment to be transparent as Mayor**, continuing my 'Ask Andy' open public meetings in all areas of the West Midlands, and participating in the arrangements set out in the Deeper Devolution Agreement, including Select Committees in Parliament, sessions with West Midlands MPs and the WMCA Scrutiny Committee.
- **Continue to support the important collaborative work of our existing taskforces and commissions**, such as the Homelessness Taskforce and the Faith Strategic Partnership.
- **Bring in external experts to challenge our approach and work with local officials to find creative new ideas**, for example on the proposed West Midlands Land Commission 2.
- **Improve the data which the WMCA provides on its performance to residents**, continuing the annual State of the Region report, but seeking opportunities to provide more frequent and up to date performance on services.
- **Ensure staff are working hard to make progress for the West Midlands**, for example opposing any attempt to offer 4-day work weeks with the same pay, and **ensuring that officers who need to be, are working on site or in the office** as much as is necessary.
- **Support our regional institutions**, which do so much to champion our interests in Westminster, from the Chambers of Commerce to thinktanks like the Centre for the New Midlands and WM REDl.





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