

Press release - 28 June 2017

New national partnership set to boost business innovation across Leeds City Region

Businesses across Leeds City Region will have more access to national innovation support thanks to a ground-breaking partnership agreement between The West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Innovate UK, the government's national innovation agency. The agreement signed today will herald a new dawn of innovation and development across the City Region (Wednesday 28 June).

With a strong innovation pedigree that has its roots in the Industrial Revolution, Leeds City Region has a growing reputation for innovation and invention – buoyed by its significant concentration of world-leading universities and largest cluster of manufacturing jobs in the country.

Despite these significant strengths, Leeds City Region currently attracts only 57% of the UK average investment per employee from Innovate UK. The new partnership will tackle this deficit by helping the region's SMEs compete more effectively for this national funding.

Business-focused measures the LEP and Innovate UK will now work together on include:

- Making it easier for businesses across the Leeds City Region to get help with innovation thanks to a joined-up, accessible programme of support provided by both the LEP and Innovate UK
- Making it simpler for local businesses to access funding from the LEP and Innovate UK
- Taking an increasingly proactive and targeted approach to identifying, supporting and inspiring SMEs to innovate.

Cllr Tim Swift, Deputy Chair of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) and Calderdale Council Leader, put pen to paper on the agreement alongside Andrew Wright, Chair of the LEP Business, Innovation and Growth (BIG) Panel and Kevin Baughan, Deputy Chief Executive of Innovate UK. The partnership was signed in front of key local business leaders at Borg Warner, in Roydsdale Way, Bradford.

Cllr Tim Swift said:

“We're delighted to be signing today's official partnership agreement with Innovate UK. The Leeds City region has a strong and proud history of innovation that extends into the present day, particularly in key digital and medical technology sectors. We hope that by working even more closely with Innovate UK and helping even more businesses access the support and funding on offer, we can ensure we remain at the forefront of ground-breaking advancement and development for years to come.”

Kevin Baughan said:

“In today’s world we are competing within a global innovation economy and so our future prosperity is increasingly linked to the ability of our businesses to deliver their customers with better outcomes through new products, services and processes.

“Through this partnership, and by working much more closely together, we can have a much higher impact by building on the key interconnections between the national goals of Innovate UK and the local ambitions of the Leeds City Region.”

Andrew Wright said:

“The LEP shares the government’s commitment to innovation and we want the Leeds City Region to be recognised globally for the strength of its innovation eco-system. By signing today’s partnership agreement, we are taking a huge step towards achieving this aim, helping us to be both recognised on the global stage and to attract the talent, ideas and investment we need.

“This agreement is also about supporting the many SMEs and businesses already in our region that see innovation as key to growth for them. By creating an environment that will nurture innovation, we will create a strong, productive, resilient economy where an uplift in productivity and business competitiveness will go hand in hand with access to good jobs and higher wages for all.”

In a recent survey of innovation across the Leeds City Region, 47% of businesses reported they had introduced new or significantly improved processes over the past 12 months, while 39% had also introducing new or improved products. In addition, the region has one of the largest concentrations of universities in Europe and research and development within Higher Education that is already outperforming the rest of the UK.

Business innovation is a key element of the Leeds City Region’s Strategic Economic Plan that will deliver more than 35,000 additional jobs and £3.7 billion of additional annual economic output by 2036.

Nationally, the Government has also prioritised innovation within its Industrial Strategy as the key means of achieving economic success, prosperity, productivity and trade. All parties hope today’s partnership will see greater coordination and support for business both locally and nationally.

In addition to today’s signing, local business leaders also took part in a round table discussion on the benefits of innovation and an SME innovation workshop, delivered by Borg Warner.

For more information on accessing support, speak to the LEP’s Business Growth Service on 0113 348 1818 or email businessgrowth@the-lep.com. Alternatively, visit: www.the-lep.com/business

For more information on Innovate UK, visit:
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/innovate-uk

Ends

For media interviews or further information on the LEP – Innovate UK partnership, please contact Kate Wilson on kate.wilson@westyorks-ca.gov.uk or Ben Ormsby on 0113 348 1557 / ben.ormsby@westyorks-ca.gov.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS

The LEP

The Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership, also known as the LEP, is a private and public sector partnership, working to stimulate business growth across the Leeds City Region. The Leeds City Region geography includes 11 local authorities (Barnsley, Bradford, Calderdale, Craven, Harrogate, Kirklees, Leeds, Selby, Wakefield, York and North Yorkshire County Council).

- Our vision: To unlock the potential of the City Region, developing an economic powerhouse that creates jobs and prosperity.
- Our mission: By acting as a bridge between government and business, we will help businesses to unlock their potential, attracting and retaining the best talent to the City Region and building its profile nationally and internationally.

Innovate UK

Innovate UK is the UK's innovation agency. Innovate UK works with people, companies and partner organisations to find and drive the science and technology innovations that will grow the UK economy - delivering productivity, new jobs and exports. Our aim at Innovate UK is to keep the UK globally competitive in the race for future prosperity.

Innovate UK is the trading name of the Technology Strategy Board, which is an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and incorporated by Royal Charter in England and Wales with company number RC000818. Registered office: Polaris House, North Star Avenue, Swindon SN2 1FL

Telephone: James Harper, Innovate UK, 07867 140481

Email: james.harper@innovateuk.gov.uk

www.innovateuk.gov.uk