

Boris.johnson.mp@parliament.uk

17 July 2019

Dear Mr Johnson,

A message from Leeds City Region – transport and devolution

As part of your campaign to be Prime Minister, we would like to draw to your attention two issues that are critical to future growth in our region – meaningful devolution and transport investment. These issues will be vital in unlocking the opportunities post-Brexit, rebalancing the economy and providing transformational benefits to the region.

Leeds City Region is one of the largest functional economic areas in the country – with economy of over £70bn GVA, a population of over 3.1m and a workforce of over 1.5m. It comprises the West Yorkshire authorities of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield, plus surrounding authorities of Craven, Harrogate, Selby and York (see enclosed map for reference).

Devolution

It is clear from your recent visit to York, that the potential for devolution to act as a driver for the transformation of the North of England is central to your vision for an economically successful post-Brexit United Kingdom. In recent months we have had very constructive talks with Ministers and their officials to secure meaningful devolution in Yorkshire, including discussions about interim devolution arrangements in Leeds City Region.

Devolution is critical to deliver our shared economic objectives; these cross political divides and are about growth in a post-Brexit world. Devolution would allow us to secure more investment in desperately needed transport and digital infrastructure, increase inward investment and help our companies export, deliver more houses to meet the acute shortage across the county, quicken the progress we are making in sustainable energy generation and carbon capture to address the Climate Change Emergency, better address the skills shortages in our workforce, and critically, help tackle deprivation where it exists in our communities.

Our proposal is twofold.

First is for the new Government to commit to the necessary interim arrangements that would allow meaningful devolution within Leeds City Region between now and 2022. This would enable the Northern Powerhouse to realise fully its potential in the short term and have devolution deals in place across the major metropolitan areas of the North. These will be well placed to take advantage of post-Brexit opportunity.

Second is for the new Government to agree to joint work with ourselves and our partners that aims to have a Yorkshire deal in place in 2022. The pending

new Government's agreement to this would, in a stroke, unblock the impasse that has existed between many of our authorities and your predecessor Governments.

We have already worked through much of the detail of these propositions with officials in the Treasury and in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. We welcome further dialogue with them, and should you be elected at the leader of the Conservative Party and become the new PM, your championing of this devolution proposal will be critical to make these plans a reality and make its delivery a priority in those Departments.

Transport

Transport is a critical enabler of more inclusive growth across Leeds City Region, and the following opportunities afforded by transformational devolution present themselves:

- Leeds City Region is the largest metropolitan area in Europe without a mass transit system, and without one our economic growth will be slowed. On top of that, your commitment to such a system would enable us to develop the next generation technology which is lighter, more cost effective and without intrusive overhead wires.
- Rail infrastructure across the region has reached its limit, and without strategic intervention, will inhibit sustainable growth in the Leeds City Region and the north. We need a holistic, long term solution that brings together HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail (including, crucially, a city centre stop in Bradford), Transpennine Route Upgrade, the East Coast Mainline and local rail requirements, including addressing the capacity issues at Leeds station. We need all of these interventions – not to be asked to make trade-offs between them.
- A key part of the jigsaw will be the ability of the North to have greater control over the levers of decision-making, funding and accountability for its rail network. Transport for the North is a good start. The Williams Review of the rail industry is an opportunity to find a better solution that works for both the North and the UK as a whole – and enables decisions affecting local people to be taken by locally accountable politicians.
- Investment in clean energy, which we predict could be worth £11 billion in economic growth and create 100,000 extra skilled jobs, should run in parallel to investment in transport infrastructure. This will ensure more sustainable travel, lower emissions and cleaner air, and will allow us to respond effectively to the Climate Emergency. This investment will mean we can work towards our ambition of becoming a net zero-carbon City Region, whilst also delivering a modern, world-class and well-connected transport system.

We hope that you will consider our twin proposals favourably, and we would of course welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters with you at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe
Leader, Bradford Council
Chair, West Yorkshire Combined
Authority



Cllr Tim Swift MBE
Leader, Calderdale Council



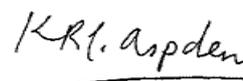
Cllr Shabir Pandor
Leader, Kirklees
Council



Cllr Judith Blake CBE
Leader, Leeds City Council



Cllr Peter Box CBE
Leader, Wakefield Council



Cllr Keith Aspden
Leader, City of York
Council



Cllr Kim Groves
Chair, West Yorkshire
Transport Committee



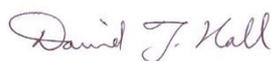
Roger Marsh OBE
Chair, Leeds City Region
LEP and Chair, NP11



Cllr Peter Harrand
Chair, Overview and
Scrutiny



Cllr John Pennington
Leader of the Conservatives,
Bradford Council



Cllr David Hall
Kirklees Council