
Report to: Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership Board (LEP Board)

Date: 20 January

Subject: **Digital Board**

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1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide LEP Board with an update on work to deliver the Digital Framework, as overseen by the Digital Board and seek feedback on how to improve the integration of digital in all LEP activity and prioritise future activity. Kersten England, Chair of the Board will present the report.

2. Information

- 2.1 The Digital Framework was signed off by LEP Board and the Combined Authority in December 2018. It sets out five priority outcomes under the aspiration of Lives Transformed by Digital Tech:
- Digital opportunities for all digital businesses: all businesses, regardless of sector, being able to fully utilise and exploit digital for business growth.
 - Digital skills and opportunities for all: all individuals, regardless of background, having the skills and abilities to use digital for economic, social and wellbeing purposes.
 - A thriving digital sector: capitalising on the successful and fast growing Leeds City Region digital sector for economic growth
 - World class digital infrastructure: the essential underpinning infrastructure to support our digital ambitions.
 - Tech for good development and deployment: better use of digital and tech to support decision making and improved citizen and city region outcomes.
- 2.2 The Digital Board was established to oversee all digital activity across the region and provide expert advice/input. The Digital Board therefore has a key role in overseeing the delivery of the Digital Framework. The Board is made up of individuals and organisation from across the region and from across the five priority areas set out above.

- 2.3 In response to Covid, the Digital Board put together a proposal for priority action areas to support rescue and recovery. This proposal was set out in the priorities within the [Economic Recovery Plan](#) and [Lives Transformed by Digital Tech proposition](#). This focused around capitalising on the current opportunity for digitalisation to support both individuals and SMEs to greater use, adopt and exploit digital tech.
- 2.4 A funding ask of Government was included as part of the proposition and we await the outcome. The ask was to support:
- the roll out of a Made Smarter Programme;
 - an extension of the Digital Enterprise Programme;
 - implementation of 100% Digital Leeds City Region programme; and
 - a package of financial support to deliver the infrastructure necessary to achieve the region's economic and inclusive growth ambitions.

The remainder of this report sets out progress on existing activities to support digital transformation.

- 2.5 The Spending Review in November set out a number of commitments around digital tech including £50.7 million delivered for business support programmes to improve SME productivity through leadership, management and technology adoption and £200 million for UK-wide digital infrastructure programmes. The full list of commitments can be found in Appendix 1.

Digital opportunities for non-digital businesses

- 2.6 The Digital Resilience Voucher scheme – part of COVID-19 response - is now well underway as part of the wider Digital Enterprise programme. It is providing grants of up to £5,000 to small firms to support with the cost of ICT equipment, and associated software, in the process enabling more effective and secure remote working. Over 500 applications with a collective value of almost £2m are now being appraised, with over 350 being awarded to date.
- 2.7 In addition, the CA and LEP is supporting businesses with recovery and resilience through the Cyber Security Support Scheme, providing practical help and advice to small firms on how to operate safely and securely within the digital environment. The scheme is being delivered by the North East Business Resilience Centre and has been developed in consultation with the National Cyber Security Centre.

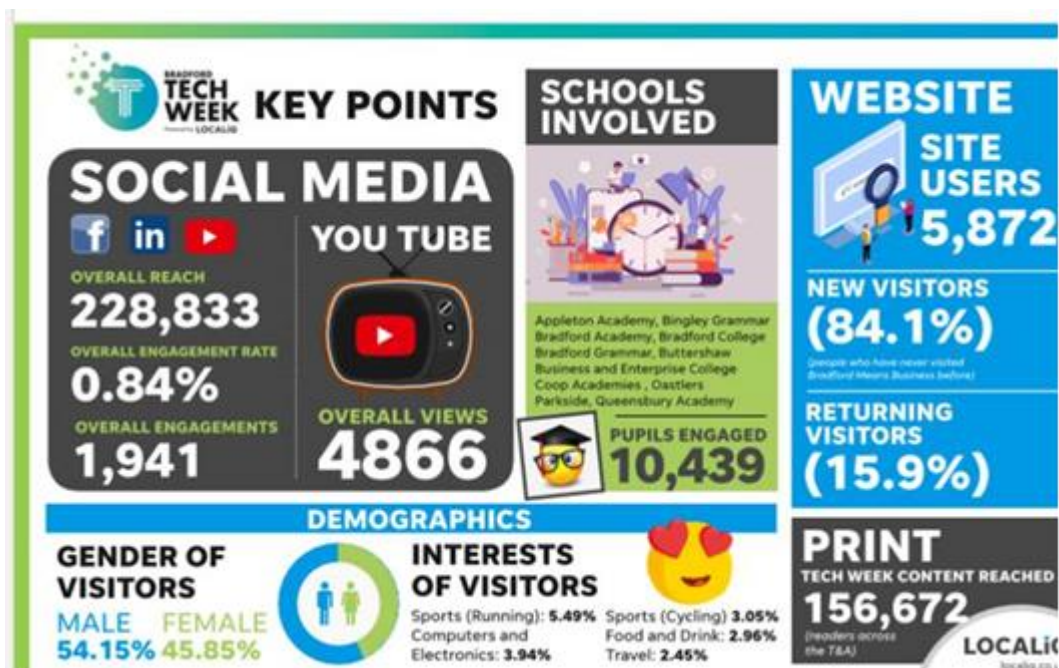
Digital skills and inclusion for all

- 2.8 The West Yorkshire Local Digital Skills Partnership was formally launched on 15 October 2020, with over 90 attendees and including an introduction from the Minister for Digital & Culture Caroline Dineage, and keynote speeches from Councillor Hinchcliffe, Kersten England, Andrew Wright, Amir Hussain and contributions from Lloyds Banking Group, BT, and Good Things Foundation (also see agenda item 9b).

- 2.9 Leeds City Region is the seventh area to secure funding for a Local Digital Skills Partnership (LDSP) through its ambitious devolution plans. This partnership will bring together the region's leading employers, SMEs, digital entrepreneurs, representatives from the Combined Authority and LEP, DCMS, as well as universities, colleges and other training providers. The LDSP will sit under the Digital Board and focus on the Digital Skills and Inclusion priority of the Digital Framework.
- 2.10 This public-private partnership will help identify what digital skills provision is needed across the region and, importantly, encourage partners to work together strategically to address these and emerging needs, and to attract and retain investment and talent in the region. The aim is to deliver maximum, sustainable impact at scale and to ensure that local people form the talent pool needed for local business, with key themes focused on:
- To inspire the growth of digital skills across West Yorkshire by reducing the digital divide with opportunities for all
 - To transform digital skills through adoption across SMEs of West Yorkshire to grow the local economy and boost productivity.
 - To inspire and influence the workforce of the future by collaborating with education providers and employers to ensure the future generation have the skills to meet the needs of the economy.
- 2.11 Following a successful bid in October 2020, West Yorkshire Combined Authority have been awarded £1.3million from the Department for Education to act as lead partner and deliver a Digital and Technical Skills Bootcamp Pilot across the Leeds City Region. Insights from the pilot will help to inform the development of the National Skills Fund offer and identify programmes to support the achievement of the Combined Authority's COVID-19 recovery plan aims (also see agenda item 9b).
- 2.12 A total of ten bootcamps will be offered, delivered by 3 independent training providers and an FE college. Each bootcamp will be influenced by employers and will test delivery models in a small, directed way to develop innovative and highly responsive courses that link directly to local digital and technical skills needs. Guaranteed interviews will be aligned to potential job outcomes for 600 participants between January and March 2021. Provision will not be bound by existing accreditation and will have the flexibility to meet needs of employers directly through industry recognised courses, building on the success of existing programmes and relationships.
- 2.13 The bootcamps will support individuals such as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, women and those unemployed due to COVID-19 or those looking to upskill. The bootcamps create an opportunity to develop innovative and responsive adult training that addresses the needs of unemployed adults and those who need additional skills to progress in their current employment.

The digital sector

- 2.14 This year saw Leeds Digital Festival convert its spring festival to a virtual one due to the pandemic, and in part due to its success (and national and global reach), the organisers decided to put on a second series of activity in the autumn.
- 2.15 LDF is the largest tech event in the UK; playing a crucial role in highlighting the region's strengths in the digital, creative and technology sectors, helping to attract new investment and opportunities. Now in its fifth year, the festival has gone from strength-to-strength creating a collaborative space celebrating digital culture in all its forms.
- 2.16 As executive sponsors the LEP places high value on the festival as it brings together digital and tech businesses from across our region on one platform. We ran three events during the autumn festival: Funding and support for digital business; The Future of Tech; Connecting Innovation – your gateway to innovation support.
- 2.17 In October, the LEP sponsored Bradford Tech Week and supporting mini social media campaign signposting festival attendees to REBoot courses and FutureGoals website.



- 2.18 A three-month campaign highlighting the #Welcome initiative alongside the London Tech Week was delivered. This attracted interest from creative, digital and tech related businesses and culminated in several new enquiries from businesses looking to relocate to the City Region.
- 2.19 On HealthTech, an initiative is underway to position the region as a viable alternative to the 'Golden Triangle' to Israeli med-tech companies and VC

funds. The team has begun work with the British Embassy in Israel to facilitate a competition where med-tech firms explore the region as an alternative to London and the South-East. It also offers the opportunity for UK MedTech companies to export to Israel.

- 2.20 In November 2020 The University of Leeds, in Partnership with the LEP, was successful in securing funding to develop a regional space strategy. The funding will be used to identify the local capabilities and develop a unique proposition to be realised through a regional action plan. A small steering group has been established which is being chaired by Mandy Ridyard.

World class digital infrastructure

- 2.21 Work is ongoing in relation to the Framework's World Class Digital Infrastructure outcome. Public and private sector investment in digital infrastructure has accelerated broadband coverage and speed availability. Coverage¹ across West Yorkshire is currently:
- Superfast (30Mpps) at 97.59% (national 96.5%).
 - Gigabit (up to 1,000Mbps) capable at 53.58% (national 35.34%).
 - Full Fibre (FTTP) at 24.19% (national 18.65%).
- 2.22 Across West Yorkshire there is currently significant private sector investment by infrastructure suppliers including (but not limited to) Openreach, Virgin Media, Quickline, CityFibre and Network Rail Telecoms.
- 2.23 Alongside this investment there are a number of publicly funded programmes that target hard to reach areas and/or locations are not viable commercially.
- 2.24 As highlighted above. the 2020 Spending Review (SR20) signalled how the Government plans to support the recovery process. This included £1.2 billion of the Government's £5 billion commitment will be deployed between 2021-22 to 2024-25 to support the rollout of gigabit-capable broadband across the UK. However, it should be noted that the Government has recently revised down its target of rolling out 100% coverage of gigabit-capable broadband by 2025. It will now aim for a maximum of 85% coverage and will see to accelerate roll-out further to get as close to 100% as possible. This change needs to be considered by partners as it potentially enhances the roll or our local programmes if coverage is going to be accelerated across West Yorkshire.

Impact of Existing Digital Infrastructure Programmes

- 2.25 **Superfast West Yorkshire and York Programme (SWYY)** - the West Yorkshire and York (WY&Y) Broadband programme uses public sector funds to incentivise Openreach and Quickline to deploy superfast broadband infrastructure to geographies in WY&Y which are unlikely to deliver on a purely commercial basis. The funding is a combination of UK government

¹ Source: Thinkbroadband (December 2020). Available at: <https://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/west-yorkshire>

contributions (Building Digital UK (BDUK)/DCMS), Business Rate Pool, DEFRA, ERDF and council partners.

- 2.26 Notwithstanding the name of the programme, the programme has now moved to 100% full fibre and/or wireless delivery. This is in line with other projects nationally. Contract Three is being delivered by Quickline, utilising wireless technology to connect some of our hardest to reach rural communities across West Yorkshire and York.

Table 1: Summary of Superfast West Yorkshire and York Programme Phases

Programme Phase	Total No. Premises Connected (Business & Residential)	Total Public Funding (£)
Contract One	64,370	8,889,829
Contract Two	41,140	13,780,000
Total (Contracts One & Two)	105,510	22,669,829
<i>Contact Three</i>	<i>5571</i>	6,898,000 (DEFRA Funding)

Source: Superfast West Yorkshire and York Programme Monitoring (2019)

- 2.27 **Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme** is operated nationally by DCMS/BDUK. To date (November 2020), the scheme has delivered over 26,700 connections nationally using £34.3 million worth of vouchers.
- 2.28 Gigabit broadband vouchers can be used by SMEs and the local communities around them to contribute to the installation cost of faster connections using gigabit-capable infrastructure. Currently businesses can claim a vouchers of £2,500 urban/£3,500 rural and residents can claim a voucher worth £500 urban/£1,500 rural as part of a group project of two or more premises. The scheme is accessible through broadband service providers who have registered to provide connections through the scheme. These providers guide applicants through the process.
- 2.29 Within West Yorkshire approximately 950 businesses have been connected through with vouchers worth just under £2.5 million.
- 2.30 The **Wakefield Gigabit Vouchers scheme** aims to reach the hardest to reach premises in the Wakefield District, particularly in rural areas. The scheme is supported by £300,000 from the Getting Building Fund and will provide vouchers to a maximum value of £2,500 for residential premises and £7,000 for business premises. The scheme is expected to support a minimum of 40 premises but it is hoped that the infrastructure provided can be used to support future connections to other premises.

2.31 The project will be subject to monitoring and any learning will be used to consider the potential for any future projects of this type across the City Region.

Emerging Digital Infrastructure Programmes

2.32 DCMS/ Building Digital UK (BDUK) are currently developing Government’s next full fibre programme. The ‘**Outside In**’ Programme will be the successor to the Superfast Programme and provide gigabit capable infrastructure to areas that are not commercially viable. Local partners are working with government on confirm how this national programme will be rolled out across West Yorkshire.

2.33 A **Long Range Wide Area Network (LoRaWan)** is a type of Low Power, Wide Area (LPWA) network designed to wirelessly connect battery operated ‘things’ to the internet in local to national or global networks. It supports key Internet of Things (IoT) requirements such as bi-directional communications, end-to-end security, mobility and localisation services.

2.34 LoRaWAN offers the ability to connect a significant number of IoT devices such as sensors at scale. Connected devices would need generally need to be low power usage and low data use.

Figure 1: Illustration of LoRaWAN Applications in an Urban Environment



2.35 Establishing an LoRaWAN network is an opportunity for West Yorkshire Combined Authority and council partners to develop new ways of addressing common issues with residents and businesses at scale in a cost effective

manner. The Internet of Things (IoT) is the idea of connecting a network of devices (e.g. small electronic sensors) which obtain and share data in real time for a specific outcome, all with the aim of driving business improvement and sustainable economic growth, and also the potential to deliver significant savings. A joint system also offers potential in terms of data capture and mining e.g. transport flows.

- 2.36 An officer working group is currently investigating existing LoRaWAN expertise within the region and considering the potential role and format of a potential West Yorkshire approach to LoRaWAN/ Internet of Things (IoT). It is anticipated that the outcome of this initial assessment will be considered by the Digital Board and Combined Authority's Assurance Process early in 2021.

3. Clean Growth Implications

- 3.1 There are no direct implications from this report, but world class digital infrastructure, skills and industry will play a key role in the transition to a net zero carbon economy.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this paper.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications as a result of this paper.

6. Staffing Implications

- 6.1 There are no staffing implications as a result of this paper.

7. External Consultees

- 7.1 The Leeds City Region Digital Board have been engaged on all the above activities.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 That LEP Board
- notes the activities underway and progress to deliver against the Leeds City Region Digital Framework, and
 - provide feedback on how to improve the integration of digital in all LEP activity, and
 - provide a steer, that if Government funding is not secured, as to how the board could prioritise those proposals in the economic recovery plan proposition at 2.3 and 2.4, using local funding.

9. Background Documents

9.1 There are no background documents.

10. Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1 Spending Review Digital and tech announcements.