



Report to:	Business, Economy and Innovation Committee
Date:	31 January 2024
Subject:	Key Strategic Events
Director:	Felix Kumi-Ampofo, Director Inclusive Economy, Skills and Culture
Author:	Louise Allen, Programme Development Lead – Business and Innovation

Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	
Are there implications for equality and diversity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide this committee with an overview of key strategic events that took place during 2023 and which contributed to outcomes in Investment Priority 1 of the West Yorkshire Investment Strategy: *Good Jobs and Resilient Businesses*; Mission One of the West Yorkshire Plan: *A prosperous West Yorkshire - an inclusive economy with well paid jobs*; and State of the Region 2022 priority: *Driving economic growth and innovation to enable good jobs*.
- 1.2 To gather feedback on this year's proposed events and request suggestions, ideas, and insights for growing them for future iterations.

2. Information

Context

- 2.1 As a convener of stakeholders across West Yorkshire, the Combined Authority leads on and supports some key strategic events that showcase the breadth of activity in each districts and in priority sectors.



- 2.2 The four events outlined in this report are Convention of the North 2024, Climb23, UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiiF) and West Yorkshire Innovation Festival.
- 2.3 Delivery and support of these events align with two actions sitting under the State of the Region priority, “Driving economic growth and innovation to enable good jobs”:
- Provide businesses with intensive support to boost productivity/innovation capacity.
 - Attract global investors to the region, creating jobs and boosting productivity within the regional economy.

UKREiiF

- 2.4 The UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum is the UK’s largest property event, hosted by the Built Environment Networking. Last year’s event was held at Leeds Dock from 16-18 May.
- 2.5 Along with promoting the region to visitors from across the UK and beyond, the event is an opportunity to amplify key policy areas and priority messages for Local Authorities and the Combined Authority, including Mass Transit, Place making, and cultural events, underpinned by priorities around Net Zero.
- 2.6 Building on the inaugural event, approximately 7,500 delegates attended in 2023 (double the attendance of the previous year), with 500 speakers and 150 exhibitors from across the public sector, the development and house building industry, and investors.
- 2.7 The conference aims to “connect people, places, and businesses to accelerate and unlock sustainable, inclusive and transformational investment”. It attracts developers, agents, suppliers, and consultants across commercial, housing, and transport infrastructure and is a prime opportunity to promote the region to this audience. As part of the event, the Combined Authority ran the West Yorkshire Pavilion with three key themes: Innovation, Creativity and Connectivity.
- 2.8 An analysis of the 2023 event has been undertaken to highlight the overall impact to the local economy. Figures show the direct economic impact is over £7.1m and social value of £2.5m. Further analysis estimates the wider economic impact of the event to be over £12m. Please see Appendix 1 for an independent evaluation of the impact of UKREiiF.
- 2.9 The 2024 event will take place from 21 to 23 May. In November 2023, following intense competition, with regions and cities across the UK lobbying to host, it was announced that UKREiiF will remain in Leeds from 2025 onwards.
- 2.10 As Destination Sponsor for 2024, the Combined Authority will again host the West Yorkshire Pavilion in the “Investment Zone”, which will act as a platform for all West Yorkshire partners to collaborate, network and share key messages.



- 2.11 Through the event, The CA and partners will tell a story of how a brighter West Yorkshire is taking shape by focusing on three themes: business, people and place. This will be brought to life through a series of panel sessions, coordinated announcements, animated investable propositions, and strategic meetings – building confidence, a “can do” approach and a willingness to work closely with decision makers to deliver. There will also be a wrap-around campaign and refreshed collateral to showcase the region.
- 2.12 Regular collaboration is already underway with all partners to create an engaging, outcome focused programme. The programme will be specifically designed to resonate with key audiences (developers, investors and the property eco-system) and demonstrate momentum and confidence in the regional market to target potential investors, occupiers, and developers for key strategic sites. A joint aim to increase awareness of West Yorkshire as a location to invest, locate and grow has been agreed.
- 2.13 A summary of the emerging programme will be shared with the committee during the meeting and further information will be shared with as plans develop.
- 2.14 Committee members are requested to note the progress made so far and advocate the importance, benefits and impact of hosting major events, such as UKREiiF, to their peers and networks, garnering further private sector support and engagement from across the region and beyond.

Climb23

- 2.15 Leeds has the second highest number of high-growth businesses after London, and as a Combined Authority region, West Yorkshire has the second highest number across the country. With recent announcements such as West Yorkshire’s successful application for an Investment Zone, the Innovate UK Launchpad, and Create Growth, the region is in a strong position to promote the region to potential investors and support more economic activity.
- 2.16 To grow this agenda, in May 2023, Climb23 took place at Leeds Dock for two days. Over 150 active investors attended, with over 1,000 delegates on each day. Sessions were held over four separate stages with over 200 expert speakers providing insights.
- 2.17 Climb24 will take place once again in Leeds on 4 and 5 June 2024. The Combined Authority is working closely with the organisers to take a leading role in the event to help showcase the wide range of opportunities available to investors across key sectors. The intention is that, through events such as Climb24, Leeds Digital Festival, and the West Yorkshire Innovation Festival, the local ecosystem will attract vital finance for high-growth businesses.

Convention of the North 2024

- 2.18 The Convention of the North aims to build a thriving and well-connected Northern powerhouse that will unlock the region's full potential to deliver sustainable, healthy and inclusive growth.
- 2.19 Established in 2018, it is an influential annual event in the political and business calendar, a powerful shared brand, and a well-developed network of partners for information-sharing and collaboration.
- 2.20 Hosting of the event rotates around key northern locations. This year, it will be held in West Yorkshire for the first time. Convention 2024 takes place at the Royal Armouries, Leeds from 29 February to 1 March.
- 2.21 It will be an opportunity to hear from a wide range of speakers to help shape the future of the North. This is an inclusive event drawing on diverse voices, including young people. Key themes will be:
- Net Zero
 - Transport
 - Trade and Investment
 - People and Place
- 2.22 The West Yorkshire edition of the Convention is chaired by Mayor of West Yorkshire, Tracy Brabin and Clare Hayward, Chair of NP11. It is being coordinated and delivered by a cross-organisational team from the Combined Authority and the NP11.
- 2.23 The Convention is expected to attract 400 delegates on day one for a series of policy workshops and 800 delegates on day two. It is an invitation-only event that engages business, community, academic and political leaders for energetic, action-focused discussions to explore the challenges and opportunities facing the North. In what is a pivotal election year, it is vital the North sets out a clear, coordinated, cross-party offer and ask of the Government.

West Yorkshire Innovation Festival

- 2.24 Evidence shows that innovation is key to driving productivity, both of which West Yorkshire underperforms on in comparison to other regions of the UK. According to the State of the Region report (2022), in West Yorkshire the proportion of businesses engaging in innovation activity has fallen steadily over the last few years, with 42.5% of businesses stating they are "innovation-active" in 2022. Although it is likely linked to the pandemic, other evidence suggests a long-standing West Yorkshire deficit in innovation activity, compared to both national statistics and against South Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, and West Midlands.

- 2.25 Evidence also suggests that although Research and Development (R&D) activity in West Yorkshire appears to be fairly high by business population, the region has the lowest investment in R&D per £1m of GVA of any English region outside of London.
- 2.26 To go some way to addressing this lack of innovation activity in the region, the Innovation Festival aims to raise the profile, understanding and accessibility of innovation, in its broadest sense, for a range of sectors and services, and to a wide, diverse audience.
- 2.27 As part of the Combined Authority's Innovation West Yorkshire service and led by wider innovation partners via the West Yorkshire Innovation Network, the third annual Innovation Festival took place 13 to 17 November 2023.
- 2.28 The week-long festival saw 25 events, attracting over 800 attendees and spanning a variety of subject areas, including skills in the community, AI in the creative industries, construction, knowledge transfer activity, innovation in manufacturing, and wider business support as an entry point to innovation. Stakeholders delivering events included Northern Trains, universities across the region, Kirklees Council, Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust, Lloyds Banking Group, and Calderdale and Kirklees Manufacturing Alliance, amongst others.
- 2.29 Three initiatives were launched as part of the festival: Digital Inclusion West Yorkshire, the National Health Innovation Campus in Huddersfield, and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund funded Innovation in the Supply Chain programme.
- 2.30 The annual Innovate UK Local Day took place in Calderdale and attracted approximately 150 attendees to learn about the broad innovation support offers available to businesses across the region. This is the fourth year of the Innovate UK Local Day, previously held in Bradford, Leeds and Wakefield.
- 2.31 An evaluation of the festival is ongoing and full information will be shared with this committee. Planning for the next festival is underway, including strategic themes, and this committee is invited to provide insight, ideas and expertise to raise the profile of the festival to become a highly significant event.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 3.1 This was a cross cutting theme in all events, both in the planning and subject matter, for example, the Combined Authority strives to hold events at locations that are accessible by public transport. It will continue to be a significant theme in all future events as the Combined Authority works towards West Yorkshire becoming a net zero carbon region.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 4.1 We hold events in locations across West Yorkshire, aiming to attract visitors to all districts and to host and/or be accessible to people living in areas of deprivation.

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.1 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion are central to all key events. Considerations are made in terms of accessibility of venues, content being relevant and accessible to communities across the region, and diverse representation on panel discussions and in audiences.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

8. Staffing Implications

- 8.1 Events of this nature and scale require dedicated resource and investment of time from all partners involved in the planning and delivery.

9. External Consultees

- 9.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1 That the Committee notes information on the strategic events, Convention of the North, Climb23, UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiiF), and West Yorkshire Innovation Festival.
- 10.2 That the Committee endorses the role of these key strategic events in promoting economic growth, job creation, and innovation across West Yorkshire, promoting the benefits to their networks and advocating their significance.
- 10.3 That members provide feedback on this year's events and offer suggestions for enhancing future iterations.

11. Background Documents

There are no background documents referenced in this report.

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 – UKREiiF Impact infographic