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

Date: 13 June 2018

Subject: **Business Communications Group (BCG) update**

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1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide LEP Board members with an update on the recent meeting of the Business Communications Group (BCG).
- 1.2 To provide Board members with an update on communications and marketing activity in support of its objectives, delivered by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's Communications and Marketing team.

2 Information

BCG meeting

- 2.1 The most recent meeting of the BCG took place on 21 March 2018 and was the first one chaired by Joanna Robinson. The meeting was shorter in time than usual due to a Local Industrial Strategy workshop taking place immediately beforehand, which some BCG members attended.
- 2.2 There were two new members of the BCG in attendance: Lee'ann Kaufman, the owner of a PR business in Leeds, and Michael Harvey who is the new representative of Business in the Community.
- 2.3 Joanna Robinson outlined her vision for the BCG and emphasised that one of her key roles is to ensure the LEP Board hears more about the challenges and opportunities facing business. In addition she asked attendees for their views of the BCG and feedback included the following:
 - it provides an excellent insight into what's happening in the broader economy;
 - the breadth of membership and the different sectors represented is good and provides a wide range of views;
 - the regular updates about how the Leeds City Region economy is performing are useful;

- from a skills perspective it's very useful to hear what business is saying about skills needs;
- it is a useful way of finding out what support is available to business but this should happen more frequently.

2.4 BCG members gave general updates on issues and opportunities highlighted by their members and this included:

- the forthcoming rise in employer pension's contributions and the increase in the national living wage will contribute to a continued rise in input costs for many businesses;
- the squeeze on margins continues;
- the results from the recent Quarterly Economic Survey undertaken by the local chambers of commerce, which the LEP supports, show that investment levels, confidence and domestic sales have all increased but exports have slowed;
- difficulties recruiting skilled staff continue;
- confusion amongst businesses about the changes that have taken place to the apprenticeship levy and the implications for levy and non-levy paying firms. Clarification would be welcome;
- concerns about the lack of clarity about Brexit and the implications this has for business planning. Many businesses are fearful that clarity will not be forthcoming in the short-term;

2.5 Another request was for representatives of the LEP Growth Service team to attend the next BCG meeting and provide an update about what services are available to business. The Combined Authority's Head of Business Support will attend the next meeting.

2.6 There was also a suggestion that the LEP establishes a business related events calendar so that BCG members are aware of what and when things are taking place and duplication can be avoided. This is currently being developed by the Combined Authority's Communications and Marketing team as part of the new Combined Authority website project (known as "web 3").

2.7 Following the earlier workshop on proposals for the City Region's Local Inclusive Industrial Strategy meeting, which several BCG members attended, members were encouraged to play an active role in the development of the strategy. In addition it was agreed that the Local Inclusive Industrial Strategy will become a standing item on the agenda for BCG meetings.

Communications and Marketing

2.8 The Board is asked to note the below updates in relation to the LEP's key communications and marketing channels for March and April. As noted in previous Board updates, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Communications and Marketing team now covers the full breadth of the Combined Authority/ LEP agenda and the media statistics presented below refer to coverage across this full range of activity.

- 2.9 The Board will note that the Combined Authority was subject to local government pre-election purdah from 26 March to 4 May, which places restrictions on the range and scale of communications activity that can be undertaken. Statistics are therefore generally lower for April than March.

Media coverage (March 2018)

Media mentions:	905
Estimated reach:	64,054,202
Estimated Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE)	£2,325,061

Media coverage (April 2018)

Media mentions:	943
Estimated reach:	47,771,373
Estimated Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE)	£1,388,225

- 2.10 Select recent media highlights are included at **Appendix 1**.

2.11 Website (March)

	www.the-lep.com	www.investleedscityregion.com
Primary audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Region businesses (primarily SMEs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential investors in the City Region
Sessions	5,776	2,639
Page views	16,907	5,737

Website (April)

	www.the-lep.com	www.investleedscityregion.com
Primary audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Region businesses (primarily SMEs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential investors in the City Region
Sessions	5,016	1,469
Page views	14,534	4,606

2.12 Twitter – March:

	@LeedsCityRegion	@InvestLCR
Impressions	126,000	98,800
Profile visits	3,891	1,774
Follower growth	140	115

Twitter – April

	@LeedsCityRegion	@InvestLCR
Impressions	24,900	85,000
Profile visits	1,850	1,443
Follower growth	63	60

2.13 Key communications and marketing highlights:

- The 2018 Leeds City Region delegation to **MIPIM**, which is coordinated by Combined Authority officers but majority funded by the private sector, took place from 12-16 March. Details of key outcomes from the delegation are included in the Business Innovation and Growth Panel item (item 14b of this meeting) but media activity led by the Communications and Marketing team delivered 74 pieces of coverage, over 4,106,264 opportunities to see and an Advertising Equivalent Value (AEV) of £127,537.91.
- The monthly **partner eNews** on the key news stories from the LEP and Combined Authority has seen increased open and click-through rates since its launch in January. Open rates are now averaging 25%, which is the highest level of engagement of any Combined Authority/ LEP newsletter. An example of the most recent edition is available at: <https://mail-westyorksca.com/3LTT-DH5V-CE3QU2MCE5/cr.aspx>
- Phase two of the **#futuregoals campaign**, which launched on 26 February, ended on 31 March. The campaign achieved 838,876 opportunities to see against a target of young people and parent reach of 40,000. It also indirectly benefitted 37,000 young people in the region through a series of #futuregoals teacher CPD sessions, delivered as part of the campaign. Further details are available in the Employment and Skills Panel report (item 14c of this meeting).
- A **series of case studies of businesses** supported by the LEP Growth Service is being developed, with three issued in March generating regional and local media coverage. In addition, media releases were issued on overall Growth Service achievements to date (including its support for over 3,700 businesses) and on the results of the Leeds City Region business survey, which identifies the link between business planning and training, and improved productivity.
- The **#4sparks campaign** to bring Channel 4 to the region has continued with support from the Communications and Marketing team. Full details are included in the Business Innovation and Growth Panel report (item 14b of this meeting).
- A programme of social media activity was delivered to support **National Careers and Apprenticeships Week** in March. This activity generated over 7,500 Twitter impressions and posts were liked, shared and retweeted over 100 times. Page views to the LEP apprenticeship support doubled

compared to the previous month. Supplementary media activity included a LEP column by Roger Marsh OBE on the roles the LEP and Combined Authority are playing in supporting young people, and on findings from the 2017 Leeds City Region labour market report.

- A month-long social media campaign to showcase the City Region’s strengths in digital industries has been running since 16 April and is due to finish on 18 May. To date the campaign hashtag **#LCRisdigital** has reached 184,270 accounts.

2.14 **Communications and marketing business plans** for the coming year are currently being finalised and details will be brought to a future LEP Board meeting. Headlines, in addition to business-as-usual promotion of LEP and Combined Authority economic and transport services, will include:

- A **business-led campaign to boost innovation and productivity** in the region, in line with the emerging aims of the City Region’s Local Inclusive Industrial Strategy.
- A programme of **business, stakeholder and community engagement** to shape the development of the Local Inclusive Industrial Strategy, beginning with online engagement and workshops to shape the City Region’s digital framework in June.
- Further development of the **#futuregoals** initiative to target adults as part of the City Region’s career learning pilot.
- Development of **impact stories**, case studies and collateral showcasing how Growth Deal investment is making a difference across the region – including a Growth Deal halfway campaign in June/ July and an updated impact report in the autumn.
- Further development of **campaigns to attract investment and develop trade relationships** with key target markets.
- Campaigns in partnership with regional businesses to **attract tech talent** to the City Region and encourage local people and businesses to develop digital skills and capabilities.
- Further **development of the LEP brand** as part of a “brand family” approach, making clear to partners and the public the relationships between the LEP and Combined Authority, and saving money.

3 Financial Implications

3.1 None.

4 Legal Implications

4.1 None.

5 Staffing Implications

5.1 None.

6 External Consultees

6.1 None.

7 Recommendations

7.1 That LEP Board members note the contents of this report.

7.2 That members offer comments on the business challenges and issues raised by BCG members in section 2.4 and appropriate responses.

8 Background Documents

8.1 None.

9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1: Select media highlights