

## CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON LEP

### CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

NOVEMBER 2023

#### Summary

1. Because the last Board meeting took place later in the month than usual this report only covers a couple of weeks. Alongside ongoing work on the Strategic and Inclusive Economic Plan, delivery of our net zero objectives and our skills and careers programmes, this report covers our mid-year review with DLUHC, some work we are doing to promote the Kings Award for Enterprise, and some excellent work being undertaken by Marketing Cheshire to promote C&W's visitor economy.

#### Kings Speech

2. Board members will have seen the media coverage of the Kings Speech. It largely confirmed the programme that Ministers have been setting out over the past few months, including:
  - reaffirming that the Government remains committed to achieving net zero by 2050 "without adding undue burdens on households";
  - investing in Network North;
  - creating an Advanced British Standard to bring technical and academic routes into a single qualification;
  - a commitment to "regenerate towns and put local people in control of their future".
3. We will get more detail on what these mean over the next few days as the debate on the Loyal Address continues. It will also be very interesting to see what is in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement on 22 November.

#### Transfer of LEP Functions to the LAs

4. Thank you to the Board members who have volunteered to join the group that the Growth Directors are setting up to design the proposed new Business Advisory Board. We will be getting in touch with dates for a first meeting shortly. In the meantime, Sandra Rothwell, an external consultant employed by the LEP to support us and the Growth Directors with the transfer process is continuing the detailed work necessary to obtain formal approval for the transfer from the three local authorities which we hope we will be able to obtain in the February round of council and cabinet meetings.

#### Cristian Marcucci

5. At the last Board meeting I let members know that we had identified a preferred candidate for Managing Director for Marketing Cheshire. I am delighted to let you know that we have now completed all of the official paperwork and that Cristian Marcucci will be joining us on 2

January. Cristian is the Assistant Director of Communications at Staffordshire County Council and has won awards for his place marketing work in the county.

#### Restoring Your Railways Fund

6. Board members may have seen coverage on the BBC and elsewhere suggesting that DfT has agreed to the re-opening of Beeston / Tarporley railways station on the Crewe to Chester line. This was a proposal for which, following a request from Edward Timpson, the LEP provided a small amount of funding towards the cost of exploring the strength of the business case for the re-opening. The announcement about the re-opening was not made by DfT but came from the group campaigning for the re-opening which appears to have found some private funding for the next stage of the re-opening work and has therefore withdrawn the scheme from the Restoring Your Railways programme.
7. Separately we are still waiting for a response from DfT on the bid to re-open the Middlewich rail line on which the LEP has taken the lead. Cheshire East have highlighted the importance of this scheme to the Government in their response to the cancellation of HS2.

#### Marketing Cheshire

8. Marketing Cheshire facilitated a very successful “Destination Chester Christmas Showcase” at Chester Market on 30 October. The purpose of the event was to brief hoteliers and other visitor economy stakeholders about the vibrant programme of events that will be taking place in and around Chester over the Christmas period so that they can promote them to current and prospective guests. Amongst the events being promoted was the opening, on 10 November, of the new Picturehouse Cinema in the Northgate development in Chester which the LEP helped fund through the Local Growth and Getting Building Funds.
9. Alongside this, Marketing Cheshire is continuing to build strong relationships with transport providers to encourage them to showcase C&W nationally as a great place to visit. We have confirmed campaign spend from Avanti West Coast in addition to an extensive campaign already in place for Chester with Transport for Wales (TfW) and a recently confirmed pilot campaign with Chester Zoo also in collaboration with TfW

#### Kings Award for Enterprise

10. On behalf of the Lord Lieutenant, Robert Davis is leading a programme to encourage more businesses from Cheshire to apply for a Kings Award for Enterprise. As part of that he and Alexis Redmond hosted a reception for previous award winners who were encouraged to explain the benefits of being an award holder. The Growth Hub will be following these up as part of work that it had already started to build a set of cases studies that it will be using to encourage other companies in C&W to apply.

#### Cities and Local Growth Unit Mid-Year Review

11. CLGU continue to monitor the performance of LEPs in terms of strategy, delivery and governance. C&W is considered high performing and, as such, placed in a tier where reviews are relatively “light” touch. With the transition, CLGU has sought to further reduce the burden on LEP so the Mid-Year review will be completed using information provided during routine monitoring and without the need for a meeting specifically for the purpose.

**PHILIP COX**