

## **CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON LEP**

### **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

**MARCH 2023**

#### Summary

1. The LEP and Marketing Cheshire has had its usual busy month working closely with local authorities and other stakeholders to deliver the sub-region's economic priorities alongside making sure that we have arrangements in place to cover the gaps left by Joe Manning and Nicola Said whilst their successors are recruited.

#### Chancellor's Budget

2. The Chancellor will give his Spring Budget speech on Wednesday 15 March – the same day as the next LEP Board meeting. The LEP team will keep an eye on the speech – and the “Red Book” that contains the underpinning detail. I will provide a quick summary of measures that affect the LEP or C&W during my report at the meeting.

#### Marketing Cheshire

3. Having said goodbye to Joe Manning in February, Nicola Said left us on 9 March to become VisitEngland's lead in the North West and West Midlands for the implementation of the Government's review of Destination Management Organisations. Nicola spent 17 years at Marketing Cheshire and made an invaluable contribution to the organisation. She was also held in extremely high regard by our external stakeholders, as witnessed by the large number of whom came along to her leaving do.
4. Just before Nicola left she helped us appoint a team from Oneday, a place consultancy, to provide interim support for Marketing Cheshire until the new Managing Director is in post. Oneday have put a great team onto the job, including a member of the Government's High Streets Task Force, a former commercial director at Chester Racecourse, and one of the most experienced destination management experts in the country. As well as providing strong support to the Marketing Cheshire team, we also have a great opportunity to learn from the experience they have gained from working across many different parts of the country.

#### HS2

5. Board members may have seen that as part of a wider statement about the Government's transport investment programme, the Secretary of State announced on 9 March that the Birmingham to Crewe part of HS2 (Phase 2a) will have its construction “re-phased” by two years with an aim to “deliver high-speed services to Crewe and the North West as soon as possible after accounting for the delay in construction” – likely to be sometime between 2032 and 2036.

### Ambition Cheshire

6. Clare and I joined the LA Leaders and Chief Execs at a meeting with the sub-region's MPs in Parliament on 1 March. The objective was to brief them on "Ambition Cheshire" a document that sets out the objectives of the Sub-Regional Leaders' Board for C&W for the next twelve months. The Leaders also asked MPs to encourage Michael Gove to open up a conversation with them about providing the sub-region with more powers and funding to help achieve some of the ambitions. A copy of the Ambition Cheshire document is attached.

### Engaging with the Public on Industrial Decarbonisation

7. Board members may recall that during the discussion with John Egan from Hynet at last month's Board, I mentioned that Charlie Seward and I would be meeting a number of the companies involved in delivering the industrial decarbonisation plan to discuss the feedback they are getting from the general public as they implement their plans. It was clear from the meeting that, although not as intense as at Whitby village, they are also encountering questions, concerns and some opposition. Charlie and I will now be inviting the comms and PR teams from the whole of the cluster to discuss putting together a programme of engagement with the general public that recognises that for most people, the things that are most important to them are all with 300 yards of their front door.
8. The meeting also agreed that there was a continuing need to engage the business community in the industrial decarbonisation work. We will pick this up through the Hydrogen Task and Finish group the Board agreed to establish which we will convene very shortly.

### Poynton Relief Road

9. The Poynton Relief Road, one of the projects commissioned as part of the LEP's Local Growth Fund programme, was officially opened on 3 March. A number of LEP colleagues were present, including Clare who gave a short speech.

### Fair Employment Charter

10. One of the recommendations made by the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission was that C&W should establish a Fair Employment Charter. The LAs have been keen to implement this recommendation and Melissa Crellin has been leading the work to develop the Charter on their behalf. The next stage of the work will be an event on 20 March to launch an initial consultation on the Charter at which Louise Gittins and Sam Corcoran will be giving keynote speeches.

### Key Account Management

11. I am delighted to let you know that the new Department for Business and Trade (DBaT) have confirmed funding for another year for the key account management post held by Ana Carbonell-Galiana. Ana works closely with colleagues in DBaT to ensure that key foreign owned firms in C&W get the support they need, particularly if they are considering investing

in their facilities in the UK. Over the last twelve months Ana has helped secure ten investments and expansions generating 195 new jobs.

#### Election Purdah

12. Cheshire East and Cheshire West both have “all out” elections on 4 May which means that they and we will have to observe a period of pre-election “purdah”. During this time we are not allowed to issue any material or make any public statements that have the potential to affect the outcome of the elections. This is a legal requirement and we will therefore keep our PR and comms activity down to an absolute minimum. Purdah starts on 22/23 March.

#### IT Outage

13. On Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> March, Blaze Networks our IT supplier, suffered a significant incident in which a significant amount of client data was inadvertently deleted by an engineer performing maintenance on the server cluster. They described it as the worst incident they have suffered in their 21-year history. Some LEP staff were affected, but access to the internet and cloud based applications was not interrupted. After invoking their disaster recovery plan all data was restored by Blaze within 72 hours (partly over a weekend) along with procedures to avoid a similar error in future. This was consistent with our own business continuity arrangements.

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