

Leaders secure £1.8 billion devolution deal unlocking decades of investment for West Yorkshire

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An ambitious West Yorkshire devolution deal unlocking more than £1.8 billion in investment to drive up living standards through better transport, improved skills and stronger businesses, while tackling the climate emergency, has been secured for West Yorkshire.

The agreement, the biggest ever of its kind, includes a Government commitment to support the development of a West Yorkshire Mass Transit System and investment from the Transforming Cities Fund which, with the other resources available through the deal, will enable the delivery of the full pipeline of West Yorkshire transport projects submitted in the region's bid.

The deal also includes a guaranteed £1.1 billion over the next 30 years in a new West Yorkshire Investment Fund, money to develop plans for future housing sites and a new heritage fund which will support the creation of a new British Library North in Leeds.

In addition to significant funding, the deal announced in today's Budget gives West Yorkshire far greater

decision-making powers allowing the region to set its own priorities including ensuring a vibrant future for towns and our rural areas while securing the economic success of our cities. Work is already underway exploring the implications of franchising bus services and identifying the actions we need to take to meet our ambitious carbon-reduction targets.

The deal will see the creation of a West Yorkshire Mayor, to be elected for the first time in May 2021, working with the Combined Authority. In the coming years, the West Yorkshire Mayor will also exercise governance and community safety functions currently held by the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner, similar to models in London and Greater Manchester. The planned Police and Crime Commissioner election in May will go ahead as planned.

York will remain a non-constituent member of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, continuing a partnership delivering through the Leeds City Region Growth Deal and West Yorkshire-plus Transport Fund.

Becoming a devolved mayoral area will be critical in ensuring West Yorkshire is in the best place to access to future funding and powers given the Government's increased focus on making mayoral combined authorities its primary route for supporting regional economic development.

Today's agreement follows extensive negotiations between the Leaders of West Yorkshire Councils and Communities Minister Simon Clarke supported by officers from West Yorkshire authorities and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

In a joint statement, West Yorkshire Leaders said: "We have secured an ambitious deal recognising the strong case we have made for investment which delivers growth benefitting all our communities and helps us tackle the climate emergency. It also represents a significant transfer of power from Whitehall, ensuring more decisions that affect our communities are taken here.

"Through the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, in partnership with the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership, we have worked closely together for many years to grow the economy, improve our transport network and upskill our people. The fruits of that collaboration can be seen in the new college buildings, railway stations, park-and-rides and cycling infrastructure schemes across our region.

"This deal will help the region which drove the first Industrial Revolution to do so again in the Green Industrial Revolution by investing in transport, including a modern low-carbon mass transit system, supporting our towns to ensure they remain vibrant places to live and work, helping our businesses thrive and preparing our young people with the skills they need for the future economy.

"The powers secured through this deal will give us greater flexibility to take decisions which address local concerns without asking permission from Whitehall and Westminster, including the ability to intervene more directly in local transport and in the operation of local bus services.

"This deal also provides funding for the Yorkshire Leaders Board and we look forward to working with our partners at a Yorkshire level to ensure we secure the maximum economic benefits of the Yorkshire scale and brand while also using our collective strength to confront some of our biggest challenges.

“In the coming weeks this deal will be the subject of an extensive consultation process with our communities, businesses, charities and trade unions and we want as many people as possible to make their views heard.”

The rail elements of the deal

- £38 million per year for 30 years into West Yorkshire Investment Fund with a 25%/75% capital/revenue split.
- Government commitment to work with West Yorkshire to develop modern mass transit system through access to a new five-year integrated transport settlement.
- £500,000 of Government funding to support masterplanning in Bradford City Centre to maximise regeneration opportunities from Northern Powerhouse Rail.
- Funding for the next stage of development of the Outline Business Case for Leeds station redevelopment.

Examples of ways the railways in each area of West Yorkshire could benefit from the devolution deal includes:

- £500,000 of Government funding to support masterplanning in Bradford City Centre to maximise regeneration opportunities from Northern Powerhouse Rail.
- Transport improvements in Halifax town centre comprising a new bus station, improved interchange between bus and rail and new cycle superhighways to Mixenden, Ovenden and Illingworth.
- Improved traffic-free access to Elland Station including two pedestrian/cycle bridges.
- A new White Rose Rail Station to better serve South Leeds communities and enhance connections to new work opportunities.
- Improvements to improve public transport on the A61 including new bus lanes and accessible bus stops as well as additional cycling facilities to create better access to Outwood and Sandal and Agbrigg Rail Station.

Photo credit: West Yorkshire Combined Authority