

MIDLANDS MATTERS - ISSUE 5



WELCOME to Issue 5 of Midlands Matters, our Partnership newsletter.

As I write, we remain in a challenging phase of the Covid-19 pandemic. This week sees an important step in the gradual reopening of our economy, with shops across the region opening their doors again, as well as the welcome return of some secondary school pupils.

However, whilst I welcome this news and the encouraging signs that the first wave of the pandemic is slowing across the Midlands, we must be vigilant – the R rate is reported as close to 1 and I am in continued admiration of those who, right across our partnership continue to do everything in their power to avoid a second wave.

Your unrelenting work, safeguarding life, is of the utmost value to everyone in every part of our region - and beyond.

I have been profoundly impacted by the recent demonstrations in the Midlands. Black Lives Matter - and I understand all those who have chosen to protest peacefully and who have insisted on social distancing. As leaders and influencers in the diverse communities that make up the Midlands, we have a responsibility to understand, to listen and to support. I hope that the positive momentum around this issue will drive progress towards levelling up our society – not just in economic terms, but in terms of social and racial inequalities too.

I am extremely conscious of the accelerating, adverse consequences of the pandemic on the Midlands and UK economies. Our [Observatory's Covid-19 Monitor reports](#) show the stark reality unfolding, including sharp declines in business activity and a rapid rise in unemployment. Our discussions with firms, organisations and institutions throughout the region have provided and will continue to provide a powerful route through which to gather insights that can help inform preparations for recovery – and ensure the pressures on our region are understood by Government.

Our Observatory has published the [latest Quarterly Economic Commentary](#), which despite the economic impact of Covid-19 gives me cause for modest optimism that the Midlands, with our vast assets, innovative business community and diverse regional capabilities, will prevail and grow strongly in time, once again. The opportunities to grow the Midlands economy are superbly demonstrated by the Access to Toton project – linking HS2 in the East Midlands to vastly improved regional connectivity – read more on this below.

Recently, the Secretary of State for International Trade, the Rt Hon Liz Truss MP, asked me to convene a meeting of Midlands SMEs to discuss forthcoming Free Trade Agreements, which was attended by participants from nearly 70 outstanding Midlands SMEs. International trade contributes over £90bn per year to the Midlands economy - in the context of recovery, it is clear that successfully stimulating amplified international trade and exports will be a critical cornerstone on which we will rebuild.

Another underreported aspect of the pandemic is the impact on mental health. We are collectively enduring a radical departure from usual ways of life and ways of working. Financial pressures in many homes are often severe. Constraints for families are extreme and children have in some respects have made the greatest adjustments and the most sacrifices. [Midlands Engine's work in partnership on mental health](#), which aims to support employers to improve workplace mental health and wellbeing, has already adapted to provide additional resources for home workers.

Playing our part, in every way we can – adding value and bringing additionality, remains our focus. I continue to be inspired by the most exceptional and extraordinary work being delivered by all Midlands Engine partners – and it is clear to me that our partnership principles have been galvanised further still in recent months, committed as we are to work together for our businesses, and for all who live in the Midlands.

With my best wishes, Sir John Peace, Chairman,
Midlands Engine

#StrongerTogether



Midlands Engine - Covid 19 Economic Impact Monitor

Issue 4 of the Midlands Engine Covid-19 economic impact monitor is available from the [Midlands](#)

[Engine website](#) This is a fortnightly report produced by the Observatory partners to draw together data and intelligence on how the Covid-19 pandemic is affecting our economy.

[VIEW REPORT](#)

**AMPLIFYING THE
VOICE OF OUR REGION**

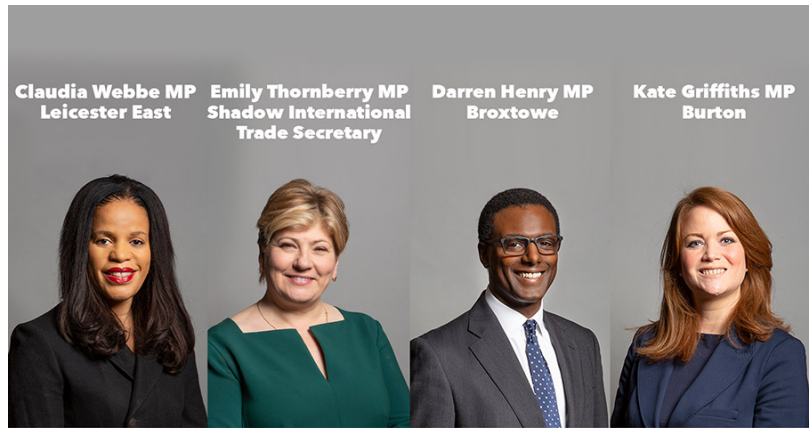


Evidence must drive regional policy

Lord Ravensdale, a Midlands-based crossbench member of the House of Lords, has called for an evidence-based plan for recovery, highlighting the work of the Midlands Engine Observatory.

In his contribution to the debate in the House of Lords on 'The case for post-Covid-19 recovery strategies that will contribute to a fairer, cleaner, and more sustainable economy',

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Raising the profile of our region

Our aim of raising the profile of the Midlands and sharing the work of the Midlands Engine Partnership with our region's MPs continues apace, as the Midlands Engine met with MPs from across the region and from all political parties in recent weeks.

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INVESTING IN TRANSPORT FOR GROWTH



New £2.7bn transport plan launched to support connections to HS2 Hub

A comprehensive new transport plan has been published detailing new bus, rail and tram connections to the HS2 East Midlands Hub for over 20 villages, towns and cities, as well as an enhanced road structure. Under the plan, the

region will also see the creation of high-value jobs and housing, before high-speed trains reach Toton.

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D2N2 awards £3.8m funding towards Chesterfield Station Masterplan

D2N2 has allocated £3.8m from its Local Growth Fund to the Hollis Lane Link Road in Chesterfield, which will form part of the Chesterfield Station Masterplan. The completed project will lead to significant regeneration, improved connectivity and support sustainable growth in the region.

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ACCELERATING INNOVATION AND ENTERPRISE



Upskilling workers and businesses to rise to new challenges

Midlands Enterprise Universities have brought together their collective expertise to help tackle some of the huge challenges facing the region as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. This includes upskilling thousands of workers to fill NHS staff shortages and devising a range of ways to support businesses in new ways of working.

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Prince's Trust

The Prince's Trust moves training and support online

The Prince's Trust helps young people to get into work or start up their own business. Since the start of the pandemic, they've moved all their training and support services online so they can continue their valuable work with young people in the region.

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Rutland County Council joins forces with Greater Lincolnshire LEP

Rutland County Council is now connected with the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), a boost for businesses in Rutland who can now access resources offered by the LEP. The two organisations are working closely together to support local businesses during the challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic.

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Lack of support for workers mental health "cuts firm productivity by a quarter"

New research funded through the Midlands Engine Mental Health and Productivity Pilot suggests that companies that don't do enough to support their workers' mental health risk seeing their overall productivity dropping by a quarter.

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Supporting R+D and Advanced Ceramics

Midlands Engine Chairman Sir John Peace, recently met with the Midlands Industrial Ceramics Group to discuss in detail their range of projects of regional significance. The consortium aims to make the Midlands the go-to destination for the global R&D and production of advanced ceramics.

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Midlands Innovation in the fight on coronavirus

Organisations from the Midlands Innovation partnership are working with regional NHS Trusts on a wide range of ventures to support the region during the coronavirus pandemic: from drugs trials

and testing to tackling supply chain barriers and contributing to the international research effort.

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Our mailing address is: Midlands Engine, Trent Bridge House, Fox Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 6BJ

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