

MIDLANDS MATTERS - ISSUE 6



WELCOME to Issue 6 of Midlands Matters, our Partnership newsletter.

Before I turn to matters of our economy, I wanted to highlight a recurring theme from a number of discussions I have had with partners in recent days - a shared sense that we recognise the public health crisis is far from over. The local lockdown in Leicester and closure of a farm in Herefordshire are stark reminders that the Midlands is not through this pandemic yet. It is right that we focus on reopening our economy, but we double down on the need to do so safely, staying conscious of our communities, their health and of course, our NHS.

Recently, I issued a statement welcoming the Chancellor's Summer Economic Update and wholly concur with his remark that we will not be defined by this crisis but rather by our response to it. I strongly support the Government's commitment to creating and protecting jobs,

levelling up the economy and supporting young people. As the Chancellor acknowledged, this is just the beginning. As Chairman of the Midlands Engine, I see three clear cut priorities that we must keep firmly in mind as we look to build on the Chancellor's announcements.

First, we need investment in infrastructure. The Chancellor spoke of Project Speed, the Government's intention to speed up the delivery and development of infrastructure projects. If we are to get spades in the ground on some of the vital improvement works in the pipeline, for example, Midlands Engine Rail, then Government needs to fund the development of these schemes as soon as possible, so that they are ready to build in two or three years, rather than seven or eight years. Our digital infrastructure also needs targeted investment – prioritising those areas where connectivity is poor and where working from home through the pandemic has highlighted both coverage weaknesses and poor capacity in the network. I hope such funding and policy responses will be forthcoming in the autumn.

Second, we need to support our businesses. Our region has a broad base of commercial strengths – including advanced manufacturing, but also agri-food, logistics, clean energy, health and med-tech. Our businesses have to be able to access finance for innovation, finance for growth and the skilled staff they need to accelerate that growth.

Third, we must amplify our position at the heart of the green recovery the Chancellor spoke of, and I was pleased to chair a roundtable on this issue last week. The whole of the Midlands region is in the vanguard of pioneering environmental innovation. The advancing Midlands Engine Development Corporation, based around the East Midlands Toton HS2 Hub, is just one of many opportunities within our region for transformational development – with net-zero at its heart.

It is incumbent, on us all now, to work together and to seize the opportunity to tackle challenges ahead in strong partnership - to recover and rebuild our economy. The Midlands is a region of pioneering minds, thriving industry and advanced technology, of inspiring heritage and incredible, determined

people. Covid-19 does not change these facts. It only deepens our resolve to see this crisis through, to rebuild and to further unlock the potential of our region; transforming the opportunities and outcomes for people across the Midlands for decades to come.

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

AMPLIFYING THE VOICE OF OUR REGION



Convening crucial roundtable events with the Secretary of State

A series of dynamic roundtable events to share regional insights into bringing business back on track is taking place. The virtual events bring together Secretary of State the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, cross-party Midlands MPs, businesses and leading academics, including from the Midlands Engine Observatory. The first meeting focused on shared regional insights and the impact of Covid-19 on the visitor economy sector in the Midlands, while future discussions will be based around key themes and sectors critical for rebuilding the region's economy.

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Green economic recovery – convening influential voices to lead debate and action

Chaired by Sir John Peace and bringing together influential figures from business, local Government and academia across our Partnership, this roundtable generated hugely impactful conversation. The discussion, alongside data presented by the Midlands Engine Observatory, will form the basis of a report to be published in the coming weeks by the Midlands Engine and law firm Browne Jacobson LLP.

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Announcing the launch of the Midlands Engine APPG – an important Partnership forum

This month, the Midlands Engine All-Party Parliamentary Group was constituted by MPs and

Lords. The APPG will meet to discuss important Partnership issues and priorities. We are delighted to congratulate Darren Henry MP (Broxtowe) and Lord Ravensdale, who were elected Co-Chairs of the Midlands Engine APPG.



Growing our dialogue with our region's MPs

The Midlands Engine continues to develop our relationships with regional MPs from both parties, working in close concert with our partners and with Midlands Connect. Our Chairman, Sir John Peace, also appeared on BBC Radio 4's Today Programme to discuss the Chancellor's economic statement on Wednesday 8 July and released a statement detailing the Midlands Engine response afterwards.

[Read the statement](#)

Over the last few weeks, we have met with Lia Nici MP (Great Grimsby), Dr. Luke Evans MP (MP for Bosworth), Zarah Sultana (MP for Coventry South) and Nicola Richards MP (MP for West Bromwich East). This continues our ambition to update the region's newly elected MPs on our priorities for 2020/21. In addition, our Chairman Sir John Peace met with HS2 Minister Andrew Stephenson MP, and Midlands Connect also met with Shadow Rail Minister Tan Dhesi MP. We also communicate regularly and directly with our region's MPs, providing them with important sources of data and information about Midlands activity, such as the Independent Economic Review, Covid-19 Monitors, and our Partnership newsletter.

READ STORY**Accelerating our Partnership goals and ambitions**

Midlands Engine Chairman Sir John Peace continues his extensive programme of dialogue with key partners from every part of the Midlands Engine. Over the course of the last month meetings include discussions with Greater Lincolnshire partners, hosting a webinar for Midlands Connect on Very Light Rail and updating partners across the region relating to the Midlands Engine Development Corporation, as we work together across our partnership, driving forward progress on our goals and ambitions.

READ STORY**INVESTING IN
TRANSPORT FOR GROWTH**

Midlands automotive projects receive multi-million pound investment

A significant Government investment of £73.5 million to develop green technologies and safeguard jobs in the automotive industry is set to benefit five projects in the East Midlands. BMW (Motorsport), Jaguar Land Rover, Ford Technologies and LEVC have all been selected as part of the scheme, helping to move the automotive industry away from its reliance on fossil fuels.

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Assessing Covid-19 impacts on aviation

A partnership between the Midlands Engine and SASIG (Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group of the Local Government Association) is conducting a study to assess the impacts of the recent downturn in aviation activity on local economies and communities.

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Improving connectivity for Midlands rail passengers

Rail commuters could be seeing better connectivity to Birmingham International and Coventry, with a planned investment in infrastructure set to reduce congestion and increase links for 2.2million people living in and around Sheffield, Darlington, Derby, York, Durham and Newcastle. The plans, from Midlands Engine Rail, have been submitted to the Government for approval, with a further phase expected to open up connections to Birmingham and Coventry airports.

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ACCELERATING INNOVATION AND ENTERPRISE



University of Leicester awarded £8.4m for leading Covid-19 research

The University of Leicester is leading a new national research study into the long-term health impacts of Covid-19 on hospitalised patients. PHOSP-COVID will be the first UK wide study to assess the health impacts of Covid-19 on patients and their rehabilitation.

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A warm welcome to the region's new IoD appointees

The Institute of Directors (IoD) has made two new appointments in the Midlands region. IoD East Midlands has announced Peter Watson as their new regional ambassador for marketing and communications. Meanwhile, Dr. Craig Marsh has been appointed as skills and education ambassador for the East Midlands.

[READ MORE ABOUT PETER WATSON](#)

[READ MORE ABOUT DR CRAIG MARSH](#)



New university partnership seeks to unite young scholars online

The Derby Scholars programme, launched earlier this year, aims to directly address the low numbers of young people in Derby applying to Oxbridge. A partnership between the University of Derby and Corpus Christi College at the University of Oxford, it has now moved its activities online to keep scholars connected during lockdown.

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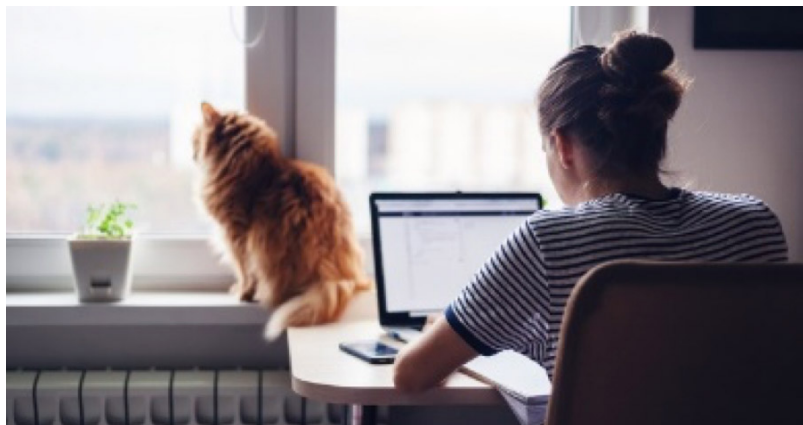


Breakable soap innovation reduces waste and cross-contamination

An innovative new 'stick' of soap has been designed by a Product Design undergraduate from Nottingham Trent University. Aimed at saving plastic waste and reducing the risk of cross-contamination, the soap breaks into small pieces, like chocolate, so consumers can use a fresh piece each time!

READ STORY**Chop chop! An innovative new chopping board helps to prevent injury**

Helping those with visual impairments or loss of grip to safely chop vegetables, Product Design undergraduate Ryan Crosbie has come up with an innovative new chopping board, Chop.

READ STORY**Building better understanding - homeworking and wellbeing**

How has working from home through the pandemic impacted on our wellbeing? A new survey from the University of Nottingham and the University of Derby aims to find out, focusing on diet, exercise and mental health and their impacts on work productivity.

READ STORY



DOES YOUR BUSINESS NEED SUPPORT?

Greater Birmingham & Solihull
Local Enterprise Partnership

#STEPFORWARD

APPLY

Supporting more local businesses through Covid-19

A responsive new programme of business support schemes has been launched by the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) focused on resilience and recovery to aid local businesses through Covid-19 and beyond.

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World-leading flood mapping technology from Loughborough University

In a world-first, Loughborough University has worked with the Cabinet Office and Airbox

Systems to provide surface water flood nowcasting for the UK Government's new ResilienceDirect mapping platform – a unique and innovative emergency planning system.

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NTU supporting business recovery beyond Covid-19

As businesses look to life beyond lockdown, Nottingham Trent University has launched a Productivity Improvement Programme to help firms adopt new technologies to improve efficiency and save money. The programme, financed by the European Regional Development Fund, is aimed at small and medium-sized enterprises based in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, already supporting 19 businesses in the region.

The in-depth programme of innovation support aims to help SMEs grow, become more competitive, and improve productivity, through developing new and improved products or services, and by upskilling staff to work smarter.

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Worcestershire chosen for new wave of national Careers Hubs

Worcestershire has been selected as part of a new wave of Careers Hubs launched across the UK. Currently the county has a Careers Hub working with secondary schools, including Special Educational Needs Schools and Further Education colleges, connecting them with Worcestershire businesses. The new wave Hub will further support this initial Hub, with a focus on middle schools in the county and supporting their careers education.

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Announcing the top 500 East Midlands businesses

A team of academics has compiled a list of the top 500 businesses in the East Midlands. They are hoping the data can be used to help the region bounce back from the coronavirus pandemic,

showing which businesses are the most likely to drive growth and create jobs in the future.

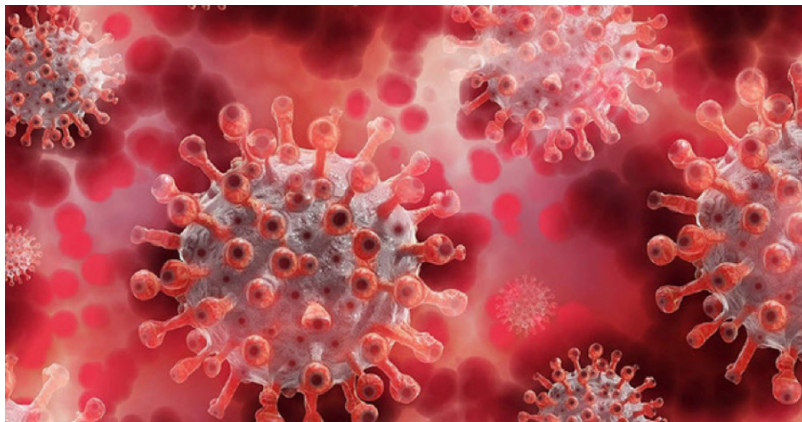
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Free support for SMEs offered via Stafford Business Hub

SMEs in Stafford can now access a fully funded programme of support via the new Stafford Business Hub. Delivered through the University of Wolverhampton in Stafford, the programme provides over £500 worth of support for business start-ups, re-launches or up scales through a structured and dedicated service based in Stafford. The project is funded through Stafford Borough Council's Economic Growth programme.

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University of Derby joins self-testing for

Covid-19 study

The University of Derby has joined a national programme to improve understanding of how many people are currently infected with the COVID-19 virus. The University is supporting the second part of the programme, called REal-time Assessment of Community Transmission (REACT-2), led by Imperial College London. This study will look at the ability of key workers to self-test, by carrying out a finger prick blood test at the hub for antibodies to the COVID-19 virus. A nasal swab and saliva will also be taken.

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POWERING AN ULTRA-CONNECTED REGION



Observatory continues to report important data insights into the economic impact of Covid-19

The Midlands Engine Observatory has released the seventh edition of the Covid Impact Monitor. This is produced fortnightly and provides a summary of research across the Midlands. This can be downloaded from

www.midlandengine.org/observatory. The latest addition examines the latest ONS data releases on GDP projections, the most recent PMI indexes tracking economic activity and many other insights from across the Midlands. Whilst the economic impact is stark the latest Covid monitor

does provide evidence of some indicators of economic activity beginning to recover.

READ STORY



Low carbon development moves forward in Staffs

A 2,300 home low carbon development is moving forward, as work has now restarted with lockdown measures lifting. The project includes plans for business units and Staffordshire’s first all-through school.

READ STORY

A graphic with a teal and white background. On the left, there are two logos: 'MI HEALTH' with a sunburst icon and 'MIDLANDS HEALTH ALLIANCE' with a colorful circular icon. On the right, there is text that reads 'ENABLING THE MIDLANDS PPE SUPPLY CHAIN VIRTUAL DISCUSSION SERIES' and a blue box containing the text 'MIDLANDS ENGINE'.

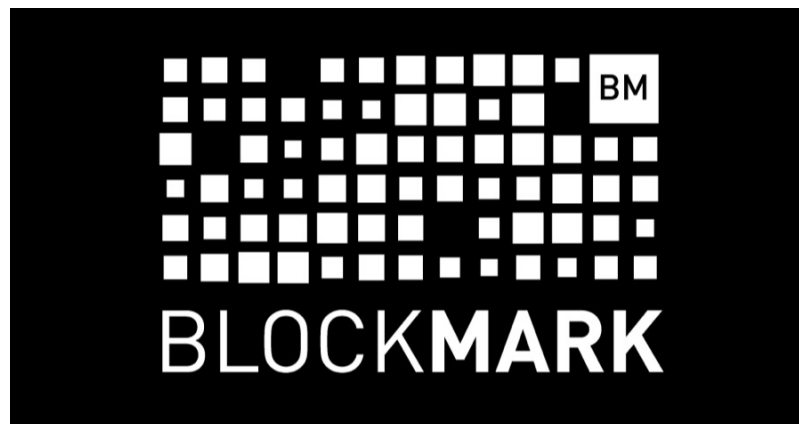
Enabling the Midlands PPE supply chain to meet future challenges

The huge surge in demand for PPE during the pandemic has highlighted strengths and

weaknesses in national and regional supply chains. Midlands Engine and Midlands Innovation Health jointly hosted three virtual discussions with manufacturing firms, academic institutions, local authorities and a broad range of partners to consider different aspects of supply chain challenges, to help identify steps to make sure the region is well prepared to continue to meet ongoing needs now and in the future.

Thanks to the speakers David Archer (Warwickshire Manufacturing Alliance), Dr Sophie Cox (University of Birmingham) and Kaj Ghattaora (Nottinghamshire County Council).

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Funding awarded for developments in Covid-19 immunity passports

In good news for travellers, innovation leader BlockMark Technologies, a blockchain start-up headquartered at the Wyche Innovation Centre in Malvern, has been awarded grant funding from Innovate UK, the UK's innovation agency, to develop enhanced personal healthcare certificates relating to COVID-19.

The company has been developing an enterprise-grade certification system called Registry which enables a wide range of certificates and credentials to be issued, managed and verified.

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Internationally significant UNESCO Geopark status for Black Country

Great news for the Black Country, as the region has been awarded global status as a UNESCO Geopark, meaning it has been recognised as an area of outstanding, internationally significant geological heritage.

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A vertical stack of three colored buttons. The top button is blue and features a white Twitter bird icon on the left and the text 'FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA' on the right. The middle button is orange and features a white icon of a document with a pencil on the left and the text 'TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR NEWSLETTER CLICK HERE' on the right. The bottom button is green and features a white checkmark icon on the left and the text 'TO SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER CLICK HERE' on the right.

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

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