

## **Conference to set out economic growth opportunities and challenges within the Midlands**

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> May, prominent business and public sector leaders will come together at the Midlands Development Conference - the region's largest business conference of the year.

The conference, hosted by Built Environment Networking, will see some of the region's biggest names in business, politics and local government lead a regional economic debate including discussions on transport, housing, skills and industrial strategy to maximise opportunities within the Midlands. More than 30 speakers will discuss and present plans for the future of the region including:

- **House of Lords UK 2070 Commission;** Lord Bob Kerslake
- **Impact Hub;** Immy Kaur, Chief Executive
- **Birmingham City Council;** Dawn Baxendale, Chief Executive Officer
- **Toton Delivery Board;** Kay Cutts, Chair
- **Nottingham City Council;** David Bishop, Deputy Chief Executive Officer
- **Coventry City Council;** Martin Reeves, Chief Executive
- **East Midlands Councils;** Andrew Pritchard, Chair
- **Midlands Engine;** Anthony May, Chairman
- **Shropshire Council;** Tim Smith, Head of Business Enterprise
- **Midlands Connect;** Maria Machancoses, Director
- **Urban Growth Company;** Jonathan Bretherton, Managing Director
- **Transport for the West Midlands;** Anne Shaw, Director – Network Resilience
- **Canal & River Trust;** Adnan Said, Director – West Midlands
- **Manchester & East Midlands Rail Action Partnership;** Stephen Chaytow, Director
- **DB Symmetry;** Jonathan Wallis, Development Director
- **D2N2 LEP;** Sajeeda Rose, Chief Executive
- **West Midlands Trains;** Christopher Blake, New Stations Manager
- **Worcestershire LEP;** Gary Woodman, Chief Executive
- **Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP;** Katie Trout, Chief Executive Officer
- **University of Derby;** Judith Lamie, Pro-Vice Chancellor – External Affairs
- **Sladen Estates;** Rachel Wood, Development Director
- **Bruntwood;** Rob Valentine, Development Director
- **Harworth Group;** David Cockroft, Regional Director
- **Coventry & Warwickshire LEP;** Paula Deas, Operations Director
- **Nottingham Trent University;** Prof Nigel Wright, Deputy Vice-Chancellor – Research and Innovation
- **Coventry University;** Prof Ian Marshall, Deputy Vice-Chancellor
- **University of Leicester / Leicester Space Park;** Grant Bourhill, Chief Executive & Interim Director – Research & Enterprise
- **Aston University;** Mark Smith, Executive Director – Business Engagement
- **Miller Birch;** Mark Bielby, Development Director
- **West Midlands Combined Authority;** Patricia Willoughby, Head of Policy

The day-long event will provide a unique opportunity for delegates to hear about the collaborative approach to economic growth from the public and private sectors with the aim of ensuring positive regeneration and development within the region.

**Speaking ahead of the event Jonathan Bretherton, Managing Director of the Urban Growth Company in Solihull, said:** “There is a real sense that this is the Midlands’ time to shine and our plans for The Hub in Solihull really epitomise that opportunity and positivity. We’re talking about the creation of a new, sustainable, urban quarter, supporting thousands of jobs and new homes, underpinned by unrivalled infrastructure and transport connectivity. Partnership working is key to delivering this and that’s why we’re pleased to be a part of this conference, alongside like-minded organisations with an aligned vision for what our region can achieve.”

**Keith Griffiths, MD of Built Environment Networking said:** “Civic and business leaders in the region have an evident ambition to deliver an unprecedented level of economic growth in the Midlands, and the next five years will set the foundations for that. It’s an incredibly exciting period for the region with the arrival of HS2 and the focus on connecting regional towns and cities to be an enabler to larger opportunities. This conference will be central to understanding the barriers to growth, whilst ensuring alignment and collaboration in the industry to boost jobs, skills, growth and regeneration across the whole region.”

Infrastructure is set to be a major focus of the event, with connectivity across the Midlands and beyond on the agenda, including the presentation by **Manchester and East Midlands Rail Action Partnership (MEMRAP)**

In this connection, speaking about inter-regional connectivity, **Professor David Simon - Professor of Development Geography Royal Holloway, University of London and Director of Mistra Urban Futures, Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg:**

*“For regeneration of Metropolitan Manchester and the East Midlands Region, a catchment exceeding 5 million people, the Derby to Manchester rail route via Matlock represents a crucial missing link in this country’s integrated national rail infrastructure “*

**Chris Page, Chair of the National Board of Directors at Railfuture, then added:**

*“By delivering a new trans-Pennine rail route, a combination of private investment and heritage rail volunteers will create additional rail network capacity, increasing the potential for modal shift towards zero carbon transport and helping to slow climate change.”*

## **Manchester and East Midlands Rail Action Partnership** ***"The Peaks and Dales Rail Link"* - Statement of Aims**

Manchester and East Midlands Rail Action Partnership (MEMRAP) wishes to add to the existing momentum behind the campaign for return of ***"The Peaks and Dales Rail Link"***, building on the considerable achievements of Peak Rail to date. MEMRAP aims to offer support for this initiative in whatever way it can. The eventual solution should include an appropriate balance between passenger, freight and heritage services, with a focus on needs of the Peak District community, for both residents and visitors. The needs of the Buxton/Peak Forest quarry companies in securing and expanding their businesses in an environmentally sustainable manner should also be respected.

MEMRAP's goal is to improve local public transport, accessibility and heritage rail services together with links between the East Midlands and the North West. Precedent for such arrangements already exist, for example, on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway, where heritage and public services share track between Grosmont and Whitby, partly within the local national park. All this will enable and encourage the continuing public shift from road to more sustainable rail and an accompanying reduction in emission levels.

Of particular importance to MEMRAP is the need to achieve a general, lasting enhancement to the environment. This is a key part of the acceptance criteria for any rail solution intending to pass through the Peak District National Park. It includes the creation of a sustainable and accessible future for the Monsal Trail, safeguarding the interests of users.

It is too early to say how all these goals might best be realised, but Transport for the North suggested that MEMRAP now progresses a Strategic Outline Business Case. This is aimed at examining all available options, the costs and benefits of each and then to propose the most suitable for further evaluation. An early stage in that process will be to work with Peak Rail and their consortium to develop a common, shared vision, together with stakeholders, potential partners and other interested parties.

The logo for MEMRAP is written in a bold, italicized, sans-serif font. The letters are red with a green outline and a slight shadow effect, giving it a three-dimensional appearance.

10<sup>th</sup> May 2019

For more information or to book tickets to the event on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May visit [www.built-environment-networking.com/MDC19](http://www.built-environment-networking.com/MDC19) and for media enquiries please contact Nathan Spencer at [nathan.spencer@built-environment-networking.com](mailto:nathan.spencer@built-environment-networking.com)