

# Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee

Oral evidence: Post-pandemic economic growth: Levelling up – local and regional structures and the delivery of economic growth, HC 675

Thursday 22 October 2020

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Darren Jones (Chair); Judith Cummins; Paul Howell; Charlotte Nichols; Mark Pawsey.

Questions 57 - 87

## Witnesses

**I:** Rt Hon Andy Burnham, Mayor, Greater Manchester Combined Authority; Jamie Driscoll, Mayor, North of Tyne Combined Authority; Tim Bowles, Mayor, West of England Combined Authority; Steve Rotheram, Mayor, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Written evidence from witnesses:

– [Greater Manchester Combined Authority ([LRS0060](#))]



## Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Andy Burnham, Jamie Driscoll, Tim Bowles and Steve Rotheram.

Q57 **Chair:** Welcome to this morning's session of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Select Committee for our hearing today on levelling up and the delivery of regional growth. We are grateful this morning to have four busy, in-demand witnesses before the Committee: Andy Burnham, metro Mayor for Greater Manchester; Steve Rotheram, the equivalent metro Mayor for the Liverpool City Region; Tim Bowles from the West of England Combined Authority; and Jamie Driscoll from the North of Tyne Combined Authority. Welcome and good morning to all of you.

Today we are going to split the session into an opening question on the impact of Covid on your regional economies and the functioning of the combined authorities, and then dive into some of the detail about how it has been going since you have been elected and what lessons might need to be learned for delivering the levelling-up agenda and the industrial strategy in the years to come.

Before we get going, I should probably declare an interest: I was the south-west regional co-ordinator for the Andy Burnham for Labour leader campaign—as Steve Rotheram just called it, the failed Andy Burnham for leader campaign. In that context, I am pretty sure Steve once paid for my curry, so I should probably declare that as well.

Let us open with the first question, which is extremely topical, on the impact of Covid on your regional economies and what that has shown in terms of the relationship between Westminster and regional leadership.

**Andy Burnham:** Good morning, Chair and members of the Committee. I remember that curry very well, but I guess we probably should not go into that on this call. As I was saying, it was not the raw materials that were the fault in that leadership campaign; it was the organisation behind it, was it not, Mr Rotheram, that was the problem? Anyway, it is all in the past.

Thank you for holding this session today. It is a really important session. In terms of the impact on our economies, it is severe. That is the only way to put it. It is on people more broadly. Over the course of this year, it has got harder and harder as the reality of living with Covid has sunk in. Here, we have been in tier 2 restrictions since late July and that has had an effect on our people in terms of their lives, their morale and their mental health, but it also has eroded the strength of our businesses, because the effect of tier 2 restrictions is to keep people at home and reduce footfall, and that is something that we have now perhaps experienced more than other places.

In terms of the relationship, I may as well get to what has happened this week. Maybe if we all think about it positively, perhaps this is a moment where England grows up a little around devolution and the relationship



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between Westminster and the rest of the country. The culture is still that Westminster holds all the power and all the money, and the Mayors on this call have to go on bended knee, really, and we have to plead at times for some of that money. That is where this is still wrong. We have devolution, I guess, in name but not in reality yet, and England needs to decide whether it wants devolution in reality; otherwise, if Westminster carries on holding all the power, levelling up will be a slogan rather than a thing that really happens, because you cannot level up from Whitehall. You cannot just drop projects on places and call that levelling up.

For me, the lesson of this week, and the reason why this became a fundamental issue for me in the negotiation we have just had, is that Steve and I could tell you that, when we were in Westminster, we were used to seeing the north of England get pushed around and told no. That was just basically what happened but, in some ways, things came to a head because of this simple point: if you are going to lock down people's jobs and lives, and you are going to do that to some places but not others, you cannot do that on terms dictated from 200 miles away.

For me, that is the point about this week. If you are going to do that, it clearly has to be on the terms of people here in terms of what will help us to cope with what is a massive change that you are asking us to make. Essentially, that is what it was: we were being asked to lock down on terms dictated from very far away and, ultimately, that was a point of principle that needed to be made and a stand that needed to be taken.

Q58 **Chair:** Steve, what has been the impact of Covid on the Liverpool City Region and the functioning of the combined authority?

**Steve Rotheram:** As you can imagine, it is a very similar story to what is happening in Greater Manchester. Covid exposed a number of fault-lines that were already there in the system, that had been prevalent for far too long, and had really started to hold back areas in the north. We had much worse outcomes in, for instance, education, skills and health, with huge disadvantages to our particular region, and I believe our economy suffered because of that and because of those interventions from central Government that could have helped us to address the whole levelling-up agenda.

Over the last few weeks, with Andy and others, we have wanted to work to really close that disparity between the north and the south. I will give you a couple of examples. We entered the pandemic with around 70,000 people unable to work due to ill health and, of course, that has only got worse. We have a high prevalence of long-term conditions in the Liverpool City Region, and the disproportionately high number of deaths that have happened over the last seven or eight months will also increase pressures on, for instance, mental health and wellbeing. The impact of that may not be immediate but we will see that increasing over the months ahead.



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If we are talking about levelling up, the recently published Levelling Up Index by WPI Strategy said that Liverpool Walton, which I used to represent and is now represented by Dan Carden, is one of the 10 constituencies most in need of levelling up. We have four of the LCR constituencies in the top 10. In other words, something needs to happen. We need meaningful economic progress because, without that, we will not address the underlying social, educational and health disadvantages in our area.

Andy Burnham mentioned being in Parliament. It was when I was in Parliament that I truly understood what the Westminster bubble really is and the fact that, for far too long, too many decisions have been taken in the interests of London, I have to say, and the London centricity. I do not just mean the area of London; I am talking about the overall London culture that exists within Parliament. That has been hugely disadvantageous to areas like ours.

We know it is not a perfect system. We want to work to try to see whether we can level up. We stand, as metro Mayors, ready to do that, but the Government need to work seriously and meaningfully with us.

**Q59 Chair:** Tim Bowles, in our neck of the woods, we have not had the same tier issues around Covid, but it has, none the less, affected the economy. How has Covid impacted the west of England and the functioning of the combined authority?

**Tim Bowles:** When you were talking about interests, I did reflect that we have probably both bought one another a coffee at some point; we forgot to declare those.

Thank you for couching it in that way. I work really closely with all of the metro Mayors. We are really closely aligned. Steve knows, however, that I will always challenge him when he talks about north versus south. I will come back to that in a second, but to pick your point up, Chair, the nature of our economy is different, as all regions are, and that is why combined authorities are important, because they are able to identify their regional strengths and weaknesses. We are being affected. We know that. We have the evidence to prove that. We are working on a daily basis with our teams here on how it is impacting, whether it is businesses like Airbus, our creative sector or all those brilliant SMEs that we have across the region. We have the evidence behind that.

We understand, because of that interaction with them, the impact on those different types of businesses and those different scales of businesses. There is an impact there, and that impact will be similar in principle to the rest of the country. Clearly, as a regional Mayor, we have the ability to focus on what we need to do here, so we are seeing that.

However, I work really closely and have a panel of all the business subscription groups, along with all the banks, because we see it as a way in which we can share information with every business in our region.



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There is still a positive view, in an awful lot of businesses, about how we move out of this and move forward, but clearly the current additional lockdown potential is going to have an impact on that. We are working really closely and we understand exactly what is happening in the region. We recognise where our opportunities are in the future.

If I may go back to the levelling-up piece, the really important piece for me today is to really share with members the fact that, as far as I am concerned—and I think all the metro Mayors agree—this should not be about north/south, because, in spite of being a very successful region, I can talk to you about those areas that are chronically in need of investment, where we have some areas of real deprivation across all of our councils. We have a really compelling case about that investment level. Traditionally, we have not been receiving the same levels of investment here in the west of England as people have seen in London and the south-east and, if I may, to my friends here, even, in some instances, around the levels of investment we have seen here compared to the north.

Levelling up is vital for us. It is vital in the way that Government now need to start backing Mayors and combined authorities to overcome those hurdles that are preventing us moving this forward and really owning our recoveries. We will all happily talk at length about the Green Book, financing, the tools we need and all those things behind it because, whenever we meet as metro Mayors, we are always tightly aligned in that.

We have a really clear understanding of what our region is doing at the moment. We have a clear understanding of where we need to be able to invest in research, in skills and in reaching out to young people across all our communities. We are doing all that work. We now need the support from Government to deliver.

**Q60 Chair:** Jamie, last but not least, what has the impact of Covid been on the north of Tyne economy and the functioning of the combined authority?

**Jamie Driscoll:** Thank you to all the members for inviting me to speak. The impact of Covid has come on top of what was not a particularly prosperous region in the first place. In terms of unemployment, we have seen the claimant count in a population of around 880,000 increase by around 18,000. That does not take into account those who have lost their jobs but perhaps whose partner is working and they are not eligible. That is really quite significant, and that is before the furlough scheme has ended. I have been speaking to so many businesses. I speak to the CBI and the Chamber of Commerce. We have a very strong Chamber of Commerce. We work closely together with the Federation of Small Businesses.

The headlines have been grabbed by pubs having to close—the hospitality sector—but this is affecting so many businesses. I took my kids to the



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dentist the other day. She was telling me that their income has dropped by 45% since March. The whole SME economy has run out of reserves. That is the big problem. It is not the case that they cannot trade; it is the case that the amount of money coming in has made everybody quite vulnerable, and I really fear a domino effect. That is going to have an effect on young people and their opportunity. As we know, if people are out of work for a couple of years, especially in the early stage of their lives, it can affect them for a long period of time.

Yesterday was the 215th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar, and it is worth noting that Nelson had his plan, but he also knew that no plan survives contact with the enemy, so he got all his captains together the night before the battle and said, "No captain can do much wrong if he puts his ship alongside that of the enemy." If, 215 years ago, Nelson understood the value of distributed leadership and if all of our modern corporations understand distributed leadership—our best public services let the professionals at the coalface make the decisions, and all modern militaries do it—then, surely, a modern democracy should be distributing command to the people who are close to the decisions and close to the information.

An example of what we managed to do is that, as soon as lockdown happened, I got my senior team together and we looked at how much money we had available. It was very little compared to the Government: we had £5 million—a propitious figure in recent days—but with that £5 million, we immediately got a whole series of interventions. For example, there was a business in central Newcastle. It is an old office block that is not in use. It is waiting there, land-banked. When I was a city councillor, the council made sure that, if the landlord reduced the rents, they would reduce the business rates. There are now over 600 small businesses operating out of there, from people who help elderly people plan holidays for accessibility, to fashion designers—the lot. All of those people fell through the gap in the support scheme, so we were able to put the money in to keep those premises available, so that they could continue their businesses.

Another thing we have done is with digital exclusion, to put things in when kids were sent home from school. Teachers were trying to do lessons with them but they might only have had an iPad or a tablet in the house, and mum or dad needed it for work. We were able to source, very rapidly, equipment for them and get that operational, so that these kids were able to continue their education in some way. That is the level of what you can do with tailored interventions. I am not even going to talk about test and trace and how that would be so much more effective if it had a stronger local component.

If we can get this kind of approach, that is how we are going to make a difference. As I said, we were not in a strong place in January anyway. We already had a base level of unemployment. We have to accept that significant parts of the economy have changed, such as people working



from home. Irrespective of viruses or anything else, that is not going to change back significantly, so we need to be creating new jobs, and that is where targeted interventions from regional leaders who are able to convene can really make a difference. Our CSR contribution is going to create 35,000 jobs in the north-east and 100,000 in the wider north-east. That is huge. That will eradicate unemployment and it will eradicate poverty.

**Q61 Judith Cummins:** My question is to Andy, and it is around the statement that the Chancellor is making today, in which he is expected to announce more support for businesses in tier 2. This is welcome news, hopefully, but what do you make of the fact that this is happening days after London entered tier 2, despite the fact that places like Manchester and Bradford have been in the equivalent of tier 2 for nearly three months now?

**Andy Burnham:** I want to pick up on something Tim said. I know we talk about north/south and the difference, but he makes a really important point. I want people in London who are struggling to get the same help as people here who are struggling. We are not trying to set people aside. We know this is affecting people everywhere. I am a patriotic person and I am proud of our capital city. I want us all to do well, but I want everywhere to do well at the same time. Sometimes, it does not feel that that is the way the country works.

To answer your question, I am really struggling with this announcement today, if this is what is going to be confirmed, not because I begrudge people working in pubs or restaurants in London the help—of course I do not—but why now? Why has it taken London to go into tier 2 for tier 2 support to become a national issue? That is the question, is it not, that everyone has to answer, not just the Government? The country needs to answer that. Why do we see London's issues much more than we see Liverpool's or Greater Manchester's issues? That is a really troubling question that this Committee needs to talk about as part of this.

Would we not have had a better response to this pandemic if, at the start, we had just devolved flexible, significant funding for the support that individuals and businesses were going to need, and that the people on this call, the combined authorities we lead and the councils within them were just given support and backing from the start to help people, rather than an Eat Out To Help Out scheme there and a Kickstart somewhere else? That is the culture we have, and it does not lead us to respond properly as a country.

I was open-mouthed when I read the headlines last night that there was going to be a support package. It was billed as being for London and Birmingham, and it was just a case of, "Hello. We have been under these restrictions for three months." I know that your part of West Yorkshire has as well, and east Lancashire, and that does not seem to have featured at all. Bolton had their pubs closed for three weeks, with absolutely nothing, despite the fact we raised that on a regular basis.





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In some ways, this makes me ask what this week was all about, with the slightly brutal nature of the process that we were all in; Steve was in it first and then Steve was played off against me. We were all, supposedly, in individual negotiations with the Government. That is how it was put to us. On Tuesday, in my final discussion with the Prime Minister, I was making the clear pitch to him that we had been in three months of restrictions and, therefore, we were in a different position to the Liverpool City Region and Lancashire, because parts of east Lancashire have been in restrictions but not all and, of course, we have more businesses than they do. That factor did not weigh at all in the final analysis. They basically said, "No, you are going to get the same as the population-based figure for Lancashire and Liverpool."

There are major questions for the Government to answer here as to how they are treating places. It feels as though they are dividing and ruling, making one rule for one and one approach for another, which is not the way you get through a pandemic. In fact, that is the worst way to manage things in a pandemic, and there has to be a bit of a reckoning here now and, to be honest, a coming back together. People claim I have done this for politics or for posturing. It was none of those things.

When Steve and I left Westminster, we were fed up of the ways of Westminster. Sometimes, as you all know, down there it is politics before people, and what we try to do as Mayors is say, "No, it is people and the place first, before politics." That is what I felt I was doing. A city region, three months in restrictions, was being asked to go into deeper restrictions. I had to say, "This is what I think we need to carry people through this," and that argument was not heard, but today it is being heard for other places that have just gone into tier 2 restrictions.

There needs to be a basic even-handedness. You have a powerful centre that is not treating places equally, and that is a terrible place to find ourselves in the middle of the pandemic. I would just say to the Government that there has to be a bit of a clearing of the air here, coming back together, with a reset between national Government and local government and a sense of fairness across the whole of England. Without it, we really are going into quite a dark and fairly dangerous place.

I just needed to get some of this off my chest. I do not begrudge anybody in tier 2 restrictions, but why was that not a major factor that weighed in our favour when we were in those final discussions with the Government on Tuesday? Why could they not have closed a £5 million gap between what I came down to be asking for and what they said they were offering, but, as we now know, were not offering because it was any more than anywhere else had got? This all now has to be a matter of a proper public debate and a reset moment for the governance of England.

**Q62 Paul Howell:** Moving the discussion into a slightly different place, it has been very clear over the last week in terms of the profile of yourselves in





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having the discussions. When it comes to levelling up, I look at Andy as being in the south somewhere. I look after Sedgefield, and I have this split between having a Mayor and not having a Mayor. That is really where the question is coming from, in the sense that you guys are shouting for your regional areas but, if I take mine, Durham county does not have a Mayor. When we talk about levelling up and the ability of people like yourselves to shout, what about the ones who are not quite there yet in terms of structure? I know things are moving in this direction. You might not be listened to, but what about the level that is not even into the metro-Mayor area?

**Jamie Driscoll:** It is nice to meet you, Paul. I am very much looking forward to working with you on this. We have not had a chance to catch up yet. In the wider north-east, we are at a place where we are working together. I work very closely with your council leader, Simon Henig. As the north-east, we have been working together closely as an LA7—all of the seven local authorities. The local authorities in our part of the world are very large, although there might not be very many of them.

Not only that but we have been working with the CBI, with the universities, with the Chamber of Commerce, with the trade unions and even with the religious organisations. We might need the odd prayer at the moment. That is very much the way it works.

I cannot speak for areas of the country outside the north-east, but it comes back to the question of what a functional economic area is. Everywhere has points at the edge of the boundary. At the moment, I represent Berwick, and it is fair to say that Berwick is not an economic satellite of Newcastle but, eventually, you have to draw the line somewhere and it does benefit significantly from being part of the combined authority. In Sedgefield, whether it is Trimdon or Aycliffe, there are still people working in those places who live on Tyneside. People have big businesses down your way and, likewise, that level of commuting is going on.

It is that functional economic area that makes a big difference, particularly when it comes to things like interregional transport, which cannot be done by, for example, the County Durham area on its own because the majority of people in Durham move across the border. I live in Newcastle and my wife works in Gateshead, so she crosses the border every day. Hopefully, we will not see a situation where there is a hard border at the edge of the region I represent with Scotland—I seriously hope we do not get to that place—but it is that ability to have someone who knows the area and is able to convene.

Just to build on this point about metro Mayors, Andy was talking about Westminster politics, of which I have no direct experience, but I remember him saying, in the UK2070 Commission speech in Manchester, how he has found politics very different since he has left Parliament. It is noticeable that my job is not to stand across the Dispatch Box and face a shadow Mayor every week and try to win a battle of headlines; my job is



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to bring people together. It is a cross-party combined authority, and we have never yet fallen out about anything. We have all the sectors working together because our objective is to do our best for our region.

When it comes to levelling up, I have an issue with the phrase “levelling up.” It implies that that is the average and we somehow have to get towards that ceiling. I do not want it to be a ceiling; I want us to move beyond it. I just want to create wealth for our entire region. That is why the system works.

**Q63 Chair:** I am conscious of time, so we are going to need to try to pick up the pace a little bit. This is important because one of our areas of interest is whether combined authorities, for example, are delivery arms of Government, or regional government in and of their own right, where decisions are made. In the context of levelling up, that is important.

We will move on now to some of the questions around combined authority performance. We know the Prime Minister has said that, where there are combined authorities, this is likely to be the vehicle where levelling-up funding, whatever that is going to be, will be delivered, but not every area in the country has a combined authority. We have already spoken to local enterprise partnerships and councils as well. One interesting question that comes up is whether combined authorities have the capacity to deliver, for example, big infrastructure projects or big services, and whether you have the powers and resources to do that.

Could we go round the table and pull out some examples of things that have been delivered through the combined authorities, under your leaderships, that would not have been delivered without your having been there in the first place? Do you think you have the capacity to deliver big infrastructure projects?

**Tim Bowles:** Bearing in mind we get involved in lots of things, from major infrastructure projects that take ages to deliver, I am going to pick out one in major infrastructure before quickly touching on things like skills, because that is the thing that can make differences in the short term.

If you take our MetroWest suburban rail project, we are moving that forward at a pace that would not have happened if we, as the combined authority, had not brought the councils, Network Rail and others together, and also got the backing of DfT to find the new money that is allowing that to be delivered. Clearly, we are not going to have people wearing orange jackets with “combined authority” on the back, in the same way that you would not with “council” on the back, but we are able to challenge those delivery arms about how we improve, speed up and deliver more effectively. Project Speed is helping us do that, and we are re-challenging aspects around MetroWest’s delivery, so we can do it on the infrastructure side.

When we look at the skills side, again, Jamie has touched on convening. It is bringing people together. We have delivered enterprise advisers into



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every school across the west of England, now including SEND schools, working with the Careers & Enterprise Company, with our schools, our colleges and our councils to deliver in those spaces.

Those are just two very quick examples of how you can really make a difference in long-term projects but also make a really rapid intervention into others. Yes, it needs to be through us as the convening power, but it is not about us being a delivery arm. That is where you use the right people to deliver, whether it is our councils or other infrastructure providers, whoever they may be.

**Q64 Chair:** Just to test some of the points you make there, you say that the transport project, MetroWest, was delivered more quickly because of the combined authority. How quicker has that been? What were the dates for delivery before the combined authority, and how have those been shortened, and to what years, under the combined authority?

**Tim Bowles:** I will happily share with you some more detail on that, and I know, particularly from your constituency, that is of interest. Please excuse the fact that I do not have my programme of delivery dates in front of me. Covid has had an impact on that.

**Q65 Chair:** If you do not have the data, we will have to move on. On the delivery of skills and apprenticeships, I have the same question. That would have been delivered before by the councils, presumably, so what value has the combined authority added compared to what the councils would have delivered beforehand?

**Tim Bowles:** First, we are able to do it now on a regional basis, so we are able to work with our businesses, understand what those businesses need and address that. It is not being done just around a simple council boundary.

The point I was making is that we have brought in other partners who are owning some of that investment. Part of the challenge that we have as combined authorities is not simply the fact that we need devolved financial settlements, but, with a lot of those things that we are involved in, there are other bodies that have public finance. We talked about infrastructure but, in this instance, it could be other finance bodies. We have brought those together, and we are delivering that at scale and at pace across the region, in a way that an individual council would not have been able to.

**Q66 Chair:** Steve, it is the same question to you: at the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, what added value have you been able to offer existing tiers of city government, the LEPs and those types of bodies?

**Steve Rotheram:** How long do you have? Genuinely, I could fill the rest of this time telling you the things we have done to speed things up. For instance, we are now working with Network Rail on a pilot scheme so that we can accelerate project delivery. That is going to happen in a place called Kirkby, where I was born and raised. That means it will be another



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new rail station from off the drawing board to delivery in about two years. That is really accelerating the timescale. That sounds like a long time to me, but these schemes sometimes take up to 15 years, and that is what we are seeing in other things.

We have had a station in Maghull North. We have brought forward the purchase of our own trains, so brand-new rolling stock for the city region worth £500 million, and they will be the most sophisticated trains, with level access for people with disabilities. We have done lots of stuff on transport infrastructure.

If we move on to housing, we have brought forward brownfield sites because we have worked with Homes England, which is now co-located in our building, so we can go down and speak to human beings rather than having to send emails. That has accelerated delivery of housing projects, including Left Bank, which is in the Wirral, literally over the water from my office, and schemes there, as well as schemes across the other districts.

We are looking at major infrastructure projects around bringing forward what we call our Building Back Better recovery plan, working with Government to get support for those projects. Again, they have seen that we can get a bigger bang for our buck, and that is why they have confidence that we can deliver these things.

On skills and our adult-education budget, we are getting better results than ever before in regard to the limited funding pot, in all honesty, of about £50 million that we get from central Government, but we are getting more people more job-ready, with the right skills for the jobs of the future. We are also planning the jobs for the future: what do we need strategically within the city region? Again, we have a future skills plan and we are starting to tailor the outputs in our colleges and training providers so that we can get the right people with the right skills for the jobs that we are going to invest in for the types of projects that we know will get funding from Government.

It is an alignment of all those strategic priorities that is really starting to pay dividends. Tim quite rightly said that these are strategic projects. These are not a couple of days or months in the making; these take a long time. If you look at what we do in another two, three or four years' time, I am absolutely certain that this will not be an experiment; this will be something that everybody in the country recognises is the only way in which you can genuinely get projects that are speeded up and delivery that is accelerated and tailored to the needs of the local area, and not just because Westminster wants to throw around a few crumbs off the table.

**Q67 Chair:** Jamie, you talked about limited resources earlier, for example. Do you have the resources you need to deliver the pledges you made to your electorate when you ran to be the regional Mayor?



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**Jamie Driscoll:** That is a very good question about resources. Levelling up is often cast as money coming from central Government to the regions. I am a firm believer in redistribution, particularly through taxation, but I want us to get to the point where we are able to generate and create wealth, keep wealth in our region and distribute it by paying taxes. We should have a regional wealth fund. We should have the powers to borrow at base rate. We can do that. I know because we have been looking into it in great detail. I have done some detailed work, and I have been speaking to people who manage funds.

A £500 million investment fund would allow us to support all of the businesses. The north-east particularly struggles by not having the levels of private equity available that you will get somewhere like London. That would allow us not only to create jobs and to shape the economy for a green recovery, but it would also give us a significant level of financial independence, because these decisions would be made by people, democratically elected in their areas, with a mandate to do that.

If we look at land value capture, we are talking about infrastructure. At the moment, we have the Northumberland Line, which has been going for about 15 years. If that gets put in, the land around it is going to shoot up by hundreds of millions of pounds. The entire scheme cost £182 million. If we could put a charge on the wealth that we have created, as the public purse putting that in, we could fund it upfront and we could have all the schemes that are viable and just get cracking on them. That would be fantastic.

In terms of the ability to move things across budget, yes, there is the Green Book, but we all know that on obesity, for example, we have hit the limit of what you can do with sugar taxes. The best thing you can do for obesity is to have a better public transport system that is affordable and gets people everywhere, so they walk a bit and cycle a bit, as well as getting on the bus, but there is no mechanism to get the long-term savings in terms of health, all detailed in the Marmot Review and elsewhere, to make the case for that.

If we were to have them, that goes to your question of whether we should be a delivery arm of Government or whether we should be looking for serious regional devolution. I say serious regional devolution, because that will allow us to get much better results.

Q68 **Chair:** Lastly, Andy, you probably have the biggest set of devolved powers and services, and one of the largest regions, under your metro-mayorality. Are you content with what you have and your ability to deliver, or do you need more?

**Andy Burnham:** We need more. You will not be surprised to hear me say that, but it is more that true devolution where we do not have to go on bended knee. That is the point I was making at the start. Allow us to take responsibility and move towards fiscal devolution. That should be the journey that we are on.



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To Mr Howell's question, I want what we have for everywhere. Everywhere is on a journey here, but let us move to a different country, where power is more distributed. As Steve and Jamie were saying, what we have all noticed is you can get healthier politics, where it is about place rather than party, because you are starting with something that everyone agrees with, rather than something that is divisive.

There is so much that the country could benefit from by properly embracing devolution. We have a half-hearted thing at the moment. We have new structures but the old politics being used with these new structures, and we now need to move to the next phase of this. Rome was not built in a day, but we are getting there.

In terms of your examples, Chair, let me give you two quick ones. On infrastructure, we prioritised cycling and walking early on, through our inspirational Cycling and Walking Commissioner, Chris Boardman. We have developed the Bee Network, which is the country's largest cycling and walking infrastructure. You asked about added value, so let me tell you directly what the added value is from a combined authority. We have created single standards for that segregated infrastructure, so rather than councils all having their own cycling standards, you start to get that consistency across a wide geography, which is really important.

We are taking that further forward now. We are looking at minimum taxi licensing standards across Greater Manchester. In a world city of our status, people will expect to come out of Manchester airport and see single livery on all of our taxis across our 10 boroughs. That is how England can benefit from this movement towards devolved standards, because it will allow English cities outside of London to start to punch their weight a little more, and we want, ultimately, to take this thinking towards a London-style public-transport system that is integrated, affordable and consistent in terms of the livery of the buses, et cetera. That is an infrastructure example.

I will just quickly give you a people example where we have made a difference. I would say it is homelessness, for us, where there was a big commitment on rough sleeping; it is a tough one. Without going into huge detail, what we have managed to do is galvanise everybody—the 10 councils, the NHS and Greater Manchester Police—and mobilise civil society.

This is the thing that you need to think about as a Committee in terms of combined authorities and elected Mayors: it is the soft power of the role, the convening power. You can be so much more than the budgets you get from Whitehall, and you can pull people to the table. The captain of Manchester City football club came and backed what we were calling A Bed Every Night, which became a Greater Manchester-wide campaign. Before the lockdown, we had reduced rough sleeping by over half in Greater Manchester. That is the power of what you can unlock here. It is just a better way of people connecting with politics and with issues than it





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always being done through the prism of Westminster debates. Those would be my two examples, and I would certainly say that, in both cases, there has been added value.

Lastly, I have a point that Steve touched on. We have a zero-carbon target of 2038. Liverpool are looking at one similar. I know Bristol and the West Country have a really ambitious one, and Jamie too. If you free us up to go more quickly than those national ambitions, it will help UK plc hit 2050. If you have this thing where cities are freed up to become the early adopters or the first movers, it is going to help everywhere eventually, because you pioneer the new technologies, you train the new workforce and it brings on the future more quickly when you have cities pushing at the boundaries. England does not have that outside of London at the moment, and that is why we could help the country as a whole, if you free up the power of the cities that are represented on this call.

**Q69 Charlotte Nichols:** To start with a declaration of interest of sorts, I put on record my thanks to Andy Burnham and Steve Rotheram for the work they have been doing with regard to financial support for tier 3. My constituency is nestled in between their respective city regions, and our fate in Warrington is very closely tied to the fates of theirs, not least because we are meeting the Department of Health today, with the expectation that we will join them in tier 3.

A key challenge to levelling up is knowing where the gaps exist and where regional growth needs to be supported. Is the lack of regional economic growth data a fundamental challenge to the delivery of the levelling-up agenda? What targets have you set yourselves, and how do you measure these?

**Tim Bowles:** Charlotte, thank you very much for that really good question. We have an incredible amount of economic information and evidence behind how we are planning everything, but I absolutely agree that Covid and other challenges will start to affect that. One of the problems we have as a region is that ONS data and Government data does not recognise the geographies that each of us, as regional Mayors, represent. We need to be able to get that information through ONS and other Government-related bodies that represent and relate to what we all are now as those functional economic areas that others have mentioned. There needs to be a change in that.

There also needs to be, as far as I am concerned, a big conversation about how we are able to bring other data sources together. We have been doing work with mobile phone providers, for instance, around being able to use future mobility zones to use live anonymous data from other sources. We need to be able to unlock the way Government look at their data and the times in which they release it, because there are lags in that data coming to us. How do we start getting real, live, almost dashboard information from those respective areas? We do it on a local and regional level with our partners, but an awful lot of that information, because it is managed and held centrally in Whitehall, needs unlocking to us. That will



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help us be both far more reactive and able to plan even better for the future. I hope that gives you some thoughts.

**Andy Burnham:** Thanks very much, Charlotte, for what you said at the beginning. Warrington is not contested territory, by the way. We both feel a protectiveness towards Warrington. You are permitted into both of our city regions, as you said, and we would want you to get all of the support that we are trying to get as part of this.

You are absolutely right about data. The question is what we measure and what is meaningful in terms of levelling up to the public. Sometimes, the dry data about the economy does not capture where people are. I would recommend one thing to the Committee that you might want to think about. I tried to create some new metrics when I became Mayor, because I wanted to make sure that we were really making a difference for people. I had a big feeling when I became Mayor that we needed to focus on young people. Devolution needed to be about young people. I always felt in Westminster that it was old people who got the promises at elections and young people who were the target for cuts, and I felt devolution had to do the opposite.

In particular, I wanted a sense that this is a great place to grow up, so I asked the team to develop a survey about hope for the future. We do a life-readiness survey across all our city region, where we ask year 10s, I think, whether or not they have hope for the future. It is the kind of statistic that national Government never collect, but this is the thing about devolution: it can be about people, not statistics. When I was Health Secretary, I always used to say that, in that job, I could see numbers, not names; in this job, I can see names, not numbers. If you start to think in that way, you can rethink what we capture and what we get.

The truth of the matter is that it is a hard read sometimes because, in places, two-thirds to three-quarters of young people say they have hope but one-third say they do not. Changing that is what will make levelling up meaningful. Part of this should be about redefining what we capture and how we make it meaningful.

Chair, I have to go before too long, so shall I make this my last contribution, without wanting to hold the floor for too long?

**Chair:** I am calling Mark Pawsey after Charlotte, and he has a small question on industrial strategy, so if we can just keep you for that.

**Andy Burnham:** I will leave it there, then, and come back in one more time. Thanks, Charlotte, and we will be supporting Warrington. You will be with us in the challenges that lie ahead.

**Charlotte Nichols:** Fantastic; thank you for that. The point that you made about hope is really important, because that is one of the biggest issues with this period of uncertainty that everyone is in at the moment.



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**Jamie Driscoll:** It is exactly the right question: where are the gaps? Data is very good at measuring the “what”, but it is not very good at measuring the “why”, and that, along with data, needs a strong principle of co-design, which is what we are building into everything. We are a very new combined authority, but we have launched a project with the National Innovation Centre for Data to get some proper data analysis done. That is not just the gathering of statistics but looking through the whys and getting deeply involved. We have our citizens’ assembly on climate change to find out what might be able to take people with us. Our poverty truth commission is looking at the real reasons that it is affecting people. Rather than necessarily doing things to people, by doing things with people you get better results.

There is any number of examples that I can give, but one very short one is that we have an education challenge that we have put to Government. We wanted to know why there is a problem with teacher recruitment and retention, and not just the levels of it. The best thing to do is to talk to them.

On housing, I know the names of and work with all the housing leaders in all the local authorities. We have a similar situation with education and all the rest of it, and it is that pulling together that gives you not just the raw data but the fingertip feel of why, which lets you really tailor the interventions that you can get with devolution.

**Steve Rotheram:** Charlotte, you are doing a great job in the buffer zone, as it will now be called, between me and Burnham. I am a bit more positive, in all honesty, about the power of data to influence policy direction. I sat on an expert economic panel, just a week or so ago, with people like Mariana Mazzucato, who I very much enjoy and support. Her book *The Entrepreneurial State* is something that everybody who is involved in this should take very seriously.

Understanding the differences that we are making in our area has to be measured, and our aim is to create a globally competitive, environmentally sustainable and inclusive economy, so it is important that we monitor those indicators, so that we can identify the progress and that we get away from just the traditional GVA and jobs measures. We are in the process of developing a dashboard of indicators, as Andy was talking about, to capture the relevant economic, environmental and social measures. We have a target of being net-zero carbon by 2040 but we will need some new measures to be able to determine that we are in the right space along that journey. We want to do more about Black Lives Matter. We will need some new matrix to be able to measure how we are doing that.

Alongside the national stuff, we want to understand the difference that we are making locally, and that has to be about those performance indicators, so that people have confidence that not only are we spending the money correctly in line with our assurance framework but also that it



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is alongside the priorities for our individual area, and that will be different, I would have thought, than other areas in the country, where we have a very determined focus on things like community wealth-building, genuine inclusive growth, trying to smash some of those glass ceilings, getting young girls involved in data programming and trying to get underrepresented groups into the jobs of the future.

We want to create those role models, but we want to change the way our economy functions, and the way you do that is by having confidence in the economic data. That is why it is so important to us that, alongside Government, we can develop a suite of economic indicators so that we can be measured.

**Q70 Mark Pawsey:** I am pleased that we have got on to some of the very positive things that combined authorities are able to do, and it was great to hear Steve and Andy reeling off many of the achievements of their combined authorities, and to hear from Jamie that he wants his combined authority to generate and keep wealth. It is important to remember that it is not the combined authorities that will generate and keep that wealth; it is the businesses that are within it that will generate and keep wealth. I am interested in how we attract those businesses to the areas where we need them.

We are the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Select Committee, and we are looking at the role of the industrial strategy. If the industrial strategy remains as just a nice glossy brochure that is produced here in Westminster and then circulated round, that would be it, but it is not. It moves on to that because there is a requirement to produce local industrial strategies, and this is why I am very keen to hear from Andy, because Manchester was one of the trailblazers. You were one of the first combined authorities to generate these documents. I just want to understand that process, how the principles that may be contained in the national industrial strategy assisted you in developing that, and how it has helped you attract business to your area. I would then like to hear from each of the other combined authorities on where they have got to with theirs. I know, Andy, that yours has been in existence for some time, so how is it helping?

**Andy Burnham:** It is a really important question, and we enthusiastically embraced the idea of local industrial strategies when the previous Prime Minister first brought it forward. It is absolutely the way to go. The city regions on this call have different industrial strengths but the governance of the country has never fully recognised that. Not to make it too political but in the past, when industry was changing in the 1980s, if it had helped rethink how industry needed to change, it would have been a better way of approaching it rather than jumping more towards the City of London and a service economy. A local industrial strategy would have been exactly what was needed at that particular moment in time.



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As I say, we have embraced it. The Greater Manchester economy is different from the Liverpool City Region economy. This is the power of devolution, and we co-wrote it, basically. It was an amazing exercise with the University of Manchester and other universities being very much in it, as well as businesses big and small. A lot of work went into this across the city region, and everyone felt a real ownership of it. It identified the big sectors that we wanted to promote: digital, health, advanced manufacturing materials and zero carbon. It was a really good exercise.

The problem, which gets to an issue that is true of all Governments, including the one I was in, is that suddenly they went out of fashion. Having done all of that work, the phrase "local industrial strategy" was, all of a sudden, off the agenda and could not be used anymore because it was the previous Government's issue, not the current one.

**Q71 Mark Pawsey:** The local industrial strategy is yours. It is not the Government's. It is your combined authority's document, and that is, presumably, the template that you are using to attract businesses to your area, recognising that what you have is different from other parts of the country.

**Andy Burnham:** You are half-right. It was co-signed between ourselves and the Government. It was a joint document. The former Business Secretary, Greg Clark, came here, we signed it together and it was very much meant to be a partnership, because obviously we cannot lever all of the funding to achieve all of the ambitions within it.

**Q72 Mark Pawsey:** Presumably you bought into it. Whilst the Government needed sign-off, I cannot imagine there was stuff in there that you did not agree with, or was there?

**Andy Burnham:** No. We wholeheartedly bought into it. It was a really great document and, as I say, it was a great exercise in working together with central Government. The problem is that there has not been the follow-through to make the things within it a reality. That is a case of people being marched up to the top of the hill and then the delivery does not come. This is something that the Committee might want to think about.

**Q73 Mark Pawsey:** To what extent can you control the delivery with the funding that you have? Are you saying that you do not have the funding to do the aspirations that were set out in that?

**Andy Burnham:** We are absolutely implementing the industrial strategy. You asked a fair question so I will give you a couple of examples. GCHQ have relocated their innovation hub to Manchester city centre, which we are very proud of. We have created a Cyber Foundry to create a centre of excellence in cyber skills, and that was very much part of the digital part of our industrial strategy.

With regard to the zero-carbon ambition, we are now looking at a retrofitting scheme for properties across the city region and all the skills



that come with that. We have invested in a creative digital skills enterprise called the School of Digital Arts—SODA—with Manchester Metropolitan University.

We are putting it into place. I am just trying to say to you that it would have so much more oomph behind it if all of the funding was coming in from central Government. There is an important point here, which is true of Governments of all colours, by the way, including the one that I was in. There are things that are in fashion in Westminster and then they go quickly out of fashion because a new slogan has emerged. If you are to run a combined authority, you want the long-term position to be set, so that you can deliver, and that requires a different relationship between us and central Government. If it is the goldfish mentality of Westminster constantly jumping on to a new thing, a new slogan or a new phrase, it really does not work for us.

**Mark Pawsey:** Andy, I know you need to get off.

**Andy Burnham:** Before I go, can I just say thank you to all? I apologise that I have to go, but thank you for the opportunity to speak to everyone today. Can I just say, Chair, that I am so glad to see you in your position? I am glad that your association with my failed leadership bid has not damaged your parliamentary career, which I am sure will continue to be stellar. Thank you very much, everybody. Thanks for your questions.

Q74 **Mark Pawsey:** Steve, have you developed a local industrial strategy? Where are you with that at the minute?

**Steve Rotheram:** Again, just picking up on the point that you were speaking to Andy about, we have, but it is also in concert with central Government. Surely, that is the right thing to do because you have a national industrial strategy. It would be bizarre, would it not, if local industrial strategies had no reference to that and just went off and did things that are completely at odds with central Government?

We are in the latter stages of agreeing our LIS with Government, and the longer-term strategic opportunities that we have put in that document will be even more relevant now in light of Covid. Of course, we have included lots of that work in our post-Covid recovery plan that we are also co-producing with central Government. That is around things like health innovation, industrial digitisation, social innovation and, of course, the global power of culture. We may not be the European capital of culture anymore, but I would say we are still the cultural capital of the UK and our figures attest to that.

The LIS is critical for that long-term recovery. We need sustainable, long-term funding from Government, and that is what we are trying to get: a single pot. We need to protect and safeguard jobs, and that is what we are doing at the moment, but in the long term, we need to identify the direction of travel that we need to start on to get to where we want, and





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that is about changing a lot of the things in our city region that we have been overly reliant on, and looking towards the fourth industrial revolution: the green industrial revolution, the new technologies, things that we have an international and global competitive advantage in, and really trying to push them forward. Life sciences, pharma, medtech and lots of stuff around modern methods of construction and green recovery are all within the LIS.

If I can just tease two of those out, on the future of the planet, we are hoping to enter into an agreement with Unilever. They want to build a national packaging innovation centre in Port Sunlight, on the Wirral. This might be able to change the way in which we use plastics, and replace plastics in the future, which will have global significance. We want, along with Government, to invest in that.

We need to change our energy mix. We have the River Mersey, as you know. It has the second highest ebb and flow, so the tidal range is massive. We can harness that for clean, green, renewable and predictable energy for a million homes and 120 years. We need to get the Government to change the way they think about investing in business and future opportunities and to get away from the Green Book methodology of 35 years and being on just one factor. We need to spread that out because it is the businesses that will benefit, because we will develop technology, modularise it and then potentially export it to the rest of the world, and that can only happen through working in partnership with central Government.

**Q75 Mark Pawsey:** Steve, you have told us about some projects. Has the realisation of those been assisted by the national industrial strategy and your local strategy sitting alongside it or, frankly, would they have happened anyway?

**Steve Rotheram:** No, it would not have happened in isolation, and it dovetails exactly with what you are indicating. It is about trying to see the bits that we are really good at locally, which national Government, if you like, want to buy. We are saying, "If you are after buying something, have a look at what we have to offer, Government."

**Q76 Mark Pawsey:** Tim, where is your local industrial strategy?

**Tim Bowles:** I am delighted to say it was published last year. We are happy to get you a copy. We worked at very serious pace and we were able to get it published just before the last general election, so we are very pleased about that.

As you heard from Steve and Andy, it was co-produced with Government having an input and, effectively, going through it as well. Steve is right that you have to make sure it matches what the national industrial strategy is doing. Ours was built with our LEP and with all of our partners in the region, including a great deal of consultation with lots of other



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groups—not just with our councils but with lots of other groups across the region.

I am really pleased that you have raised that question today because, in terms of Covid, there will need to be a resetting of that. To be very clear, we are already working on that and our LEP is taking that challenge up to be able to address how we need to review our local industrial strategy. It is the pillar around which we have been building and will continue to build the strengths in our region.

We have all touched on the fact that it allows us to focus on our real strengths and to make those really strong cases to Government but also to business, nationally and internationally, about our being the right place to invest for our strengths. We have lots of examples of that, and I am really pleased that our inward-investment team are still receiving really positive and good inquiries about businesses that are already, in spite of Covid, looking to locate and set up operations here.

**Q77 Mark Pawsey:** Would you say the fact that you have that strategy in place has helped you in that? Are there investments that you can point to that you might not have got without that alignment with the Government's industrial strategy and the document that you have prepared?

**Tim Bowles:** Ours was published, as I say, towards the end of last year. What we were very clear on in there was about where our strengths lie and, when I look at the investment that we are receiving into the region around research, development, tech and innovation, they fit into those pillars.

May I also put quickly into this mix the way in which we then use our local industrial strategy to target our investments as a combined authority in terms of how we are supporting those things? It has a huge evidence base behind it. The important thing when you are looking at investments, whether it is from the combined authority, from business or from Government, is always that you have the evidence to back up those business cases and why we are looking for things.

I would quickly like to highlight, if I may, how, for us, research and development is key. We work incredibly closely with our universities and other start-ups. We are really interested because Government are looking almost at that next generation industrial strategy that is perhaps going to be based heavily on science, technology and innovation. Each of us, as regions, will have our specialities and those things that we excel in, and it is another great opportunity for us, as Mayors and regions, to really build on those strengths.

The Chair talked a little earlier about combined authorities almost being arms of Government. I do not think any of us would say that literally, but it is our ability to work with Government, irrespective of where we are and what the parties are, to show how we, as regions, can develop not



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just our regional economy for the benefit of everybody but how we deliver for the country as well. Ours is very much a piece that we are looking at in terms of that future.

I welcome that part. We are all really keen to see that element about green technology. We have invested in the new Institute for Advanced Automotive Propulsion Systems. We are investing in DETI, the Digital Engineering Technology & Innovation centre. Our primes like Airbus and GKN have all bought into this, and it allows us to funnel and focus our investments on those new technologies that are going to really provide those strengths and make sure we continue at the forefront as an economy.

**Q78 Mark Pawsey:** Jamie, we are short of time, but could you give us an update on your local industrial strategy?

**Jamie Driscoll:** It has been developed by the LEP and not by the North of Tyne Combined Authority, so it is not the industrial strategy of the organisation that I lead. It covers the wider north-east. It has not been officially agreed yet. My conversation with the outgoing LEP chair, who stepped down in the last few weeks and has been replaced after serving for a long time, was that it was sent backwards and forwards to Whitehall a couple of times.

**Q79 Mark Pawsey:** Are you missing out because you do not have one?

**Jamie Driscoll:** I am not sure that there is a control to that experiment. What I know is that we have been able to secure inward investment and brought 1,000 jobs here.

**Q80 Mark Pawsey:** Would you have done better if it had all been tidied up and put to bed?

**Jamie Driscoll:** The best way to answer that is to say that the biggest opportunity for growth for the north of Tyne is with clean energy and offshore wind. There are a couple of things that are massive barriers to that. One, quite literally, is a set of cables that go across the Tyne and carry the national grid. They need to be buried under the Tyne. We could produce that entire project locally on the banks of the Tyne, if the funding was available. That is a barrier to export.

When it comes to the sector deal with offshore wind—this is very BEIS-relevant, and I have spoken to Alok Sharma and others about this—the deal requires that 60% is local content. That is not being hit and not being monitored. At the moment, we are seeing very large projects go abroad, to the Gulf and to the Far East. These are for things that get stationed in UK territorial waters. These are things that could generate massive amounts of jobs and wealth here, as well as clean energy. These are the sorts of things that our local industrial strategy would not have the power to do anyway.

**Mark Pawsey:** You are telling us that there are limitations. Jamie, we



need to move on. I am getting a glare from the Chair.

- Q81 **Chair:** It is a polite glare. Jamie, very quickly, you said the local enterprise partnership's local industrial strategy has not been signed off. We have been told previously by the chair of the LEP Network that all of England's 38 local industrial strategies had been signed off. Do you know whether it has or has not been signed off for your region?

**Jamie Driscoll:** That would be a question to check. The last conversation I had, it was not, and I have just had a look on the internet.

- Q82 **Paul Howell:** Turning the conversation around a little bit to come from the other angle, we have talked about the linkage of Mayors to Government. What about to your populations? Just to come back on a couple of issues while you think about that particular subject, Andy mentioned cross-country and being for the UK. I chair the APPG on left-behind communities and I get that it is all the UK that we need to look at, not just spots on it. In terms of working cross-party, there is no better example than what Ben Houchen had to do for the Tees Valley, with five Labour councils originally. I get the cross-party working. Jamie, I would be delighted to meet you at some time and really have a good conversation, so I look forward to that.

Coming back to the question, which is about you guys and your communities, I know, from where I sit in the Tees Valley, that Ben Houchen has a good profile locally. I have seen a huge amount of Andy Burnham on the news lately. I do not have a perspective in terms of your local profiles in your local areas. More importantly, coming out of business, how would I know whether I am dealing with you, whether I am dealing with the LEP or whether I am dealing with the local authority? How do you get that clarity of message to business in terms of driving economic growth?

**Steve Rotheram:** That was one of the first questions I tackled when I was elected. You are absolutely right: the premise of the question is predicated on the fact that it is a very cluttered landscape, if you are a business. If you are an inward investor going into an area, who do you go to? What organisation do you first approach? We looked at something called One Front Door, which was the opportunity to pull the six districts and all of the business support agencies together, and we have done that. Believe me, it is not an easy task, but we have done it. It is now called the Growth Platform, and so all inquiries—FDI or whatever it might be—go through one front door, through the Growth Platform.

We were once accused of missing out on an investment opportunity because two or three of our local authorities were basically competing against each other for that investment opportunity, instead of looking at the best strategic fit for the opportunity. That has all gone now. When we have an inquiry that comes into us, we look at where we can best fit this particular inquiry into the geography of the Liverpool City Region, and then gather round the business support so that we can ensure we are successful, and it is demonstrably working.



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**Q83 Paul Howell:** I will come to the other guys as well. Your starting point was particularly poor—not you but everybody. All the metro Mayors had very low election turnouts, so you are gathering your profile and moving it on. Tim, do you want to give your perspective on that?

**Tim Bowles:** Steve touched on the fact that business and investors really understand the role of metro Mayors. It is around economic development and attracting investment, so they really understand and get it. Again, like Steve was talking about, our Invest Bristol & Bath team is that front door where those inquiries come in. That team then try to look at the best solution across the region. Bear in mind that it is not just about investment into a site; it is about investments in jobs and the wealth that creates. That crosses all of your borders. That is why we are a functional economic market area in terms of how we move, so business absolutely gets it and that works effectively.

Steve's point about one front door is a good one. I also talk a great deal about there being no wrong door. For me, the economics of our region will still expand if somebody goes and approaches any of our individual councils, because we will still all work together, so I very much see it as a no-wrong-door aspect, but we are landing investment, as I say, in terms of new investment and growth-attracting businesses relocating here and expanding.

The point around our electorate is a very good one because what we all need to be able to do is, by working with Government, explain what we can do as Mayors to make differences to people's lives. I know I have made differences to thousands and thousands of people's lives across the region, and we are doing that in lots of ways. We are working with every school in the region. We are working on reskilling existing workforces. We work with every stakeholder in that space. Thousands and thousands of people are already directly benefiting from what we do. We all need to up that in terms of what we are showing, delivering and communicating. Often, it is not just about communications; it is about individuals comprehending what we are doing as well.

Of course, we all have to keep working at that, but I am really positive about what we have seen as a result of having a metro Mayor and what we have driven in that economic growth: new jobs, new business and new investment. It is then converting that and translating it so that people really understand what we are delivering.

**Paul Howell:** I endorse that, Tim, in terms of a lot of things. I touch it, feel it and see it in the Tees Valley, where it is a clear thing that business would see Ben Houchen and his team as being the people who drive that. I will go back at some point to the same conversation I had earlier in terms of the ones outside that, like Durham, as to how we get that clarity. Jamie, do you want to finish this conversation off with where you are on things?



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**Jamie Driscoll:** Just to answer the previous question, I have had confirmation that the industrial strategy has not been signed off by Government and was never published, so there we go.

On the clarity of message to business, we have all of our local teams working together now for inward investment. It has been very effective. We have had some very big international investments come to this part of the world. We have worked with a global corporate. Perhaps a narrative example is best. I was approached by someone who had read my manifesto and who was working for a global corporate. They said, "I have this idea for an innovator." This was to do with green technology. "I have to persuade my international boss to do it, but my colleagues told me not to bother coming to you because anything to do with local authorities takes forever." Within six months, we had it signed off and it was operational, and this is bringing really high-quality, scientist-level jobs to the area, as well as a spinoff. That centre is collaborating with a load of smaller local start-ups around the universities and so on. That is really effective, where you can do it.

Q84 **Chair:** Just very briefly, Steve and Tim, you both have high-profile city Mayors who came before metro Mayors: Joe Anderson in Liverpool, and Marvin Rees in Bristol. I declare my association with Marvin as a Labour colleague in the city I represent. Is there any confusion about whether local businesses go to Joe and Marvin or to Steve and Tim? How does that work?

**Steve Rotheram:** There is always confusion about politics. People do not understand—and you will know this as an MP—whether they should go to an MP or a councillor, or what the different responsibilities are. The way we tackle that is by having politics as part of a child's education. Get it very early on so that people understand the processes that, at a later date, they will probably rely on.

On the situation in our area, we have a city Mayor, we have a metro Mayor, we have a lord mayor of Liverpool and we have five district mayors, but we also have parish mayors. There are 11 people with the title "mayor" and we expect people to understand who they should go to. The great thing is that, as we are talking about with BEIS, if it is an inquiry about the economy, it goes through the Growth Platform anyway, so it circumvents the confusion.

Just on one last issue, Paul mentioned profile. I could do without my profile in any way being enhanced in the public mind through constant references by the Prime Minister. Apparently, the lovely Jacob Rees-Mogg has just mentioned me in the House and, again, I could do without that. Jacob and I have so much in common now.

Q85 **Chair:** Tim, do people in the west of England know who you are?

**Tim Bowles:** They certainly know what we are doing and, yes, lots of people do. I am just going to pick up your point about Marvin, if I may.





We work very closely together in these pieces. I said earlier that there is no wrong door. Bristol is vital to our regional economy. People work in and out of the region. How we work together is vital. You will know that we go on international trade missions together. We stand and present across the country about driving investment into our region. It is absolutely vital that we all work together. Like Steve, we have lots of other mayors as well, and that was part of my discussion very early doors, pre 2017, with Greg Clark, about how we are picking the wrong title for this, because it does confuse people. We must all work together across councils, across businesses and across politics to make sure we are seeing our region thrive and expand.

**Q86 Judith Cummins:** The Committee has heard much about the Government's levelling-up policy. The Northern Powerhouse Partnership has announced a strategy to end the north-south divide. The LEP Network has published a five-point plan for recovery. What do you think the relationship between Government and regional metro Mayors is and should be to deliver the levelling-up agenda? Crucially, how and who should be held to account for its successes and failures?

**Tim Bowles:** You have all heard us talk about the role of Government and metro Mayors. It is time for that relationship to step up now. We are all committed, cross-party, to delivering for Government because we are all committed to delivering for the people in our region. That relationship needs to continue to strengthen. It also has to be addressed—we have touched on it time and time again—around how that relationship works in terms of funding and how we are able to deliver. Every one of us on this call will do that if we are able to unlock those parts.

I can assure you that all the metro Mayors work very closely together and come together to keep pushing that same message to Government: "We are here; we will work with you; we will deliver for our regions and for the country." That is why we need things to be reinforced around those longer-term financial settlements, so that we are not constantly bidding in, but making sure that we are able to be recognised as what devolution was about, which is people in our regions being able to make the right decisions for the region—people who are in the region, not in Whitehall. I hope my colleagues will not contradict me, but I am sure we are all absolutely aligned on that and will work really closely together.

**Steve Rotheram:** We do not make it easy for people, do we? In our area, we have this new thing called a combined authority. I am then part of Transport for the North, so TfN is something that people will know. On top of that, there is the Northern Powerhouse Partnership, on which I lead for skills. On top of that, Grant Shapps has put something in called the Northern Transport Acceleration Council. We then have the Convention of the North. People are very confused about the myriad different organisations, and I do not blame them. In some cases, you wonder what hat you are wearing in the same room. We need to take people with us.



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In regard to our specific roles as metro Mayors, we are the conduit in a lot of this. We are the conduit from central Government to our local authorities on many occasions, and we are the conduit between things like the Northern Powerhouse Partnership and Transport for the North and what happens in our area. They are two-way processes.

I would simplify things, if I am absolutely honest. Before I was a Labour MP, John Prescott was talking about pulling together assemblies. It makes more sense to have a larger footprint, so that we can genuinely start to level up the north.

**Jamie Driscoll:** You raise a really interesting question. In a democracy, you need a mandate. That is one of the things that you get with a regional Mayor. It is a direct mandate, and people know. Even if they do not like you, they have the chance to vote against you, so that is one of the strengths of this model.

In terms of the powers, they are not there. It has to be more than funding. Mark Carney was talking to an APPG about COP 26, and he used this wonderful phrase, when he was talking about businesses, of “the tragedy of the horizon.” That is what a lot of funding settlements are. You bid in and wait for a year, or sometimes two or three years, to find out whether you are going to get it. Then you have to spend it in a hurry. You cannot plan on that basis.

We have this tragedy of the horizon. We need a long-term funding settlement. We should be able to agree what the objectives are with central Government, which are, of course, the national Government, but then the means and methods of delivery have to be devolved. That is why we need regional wealth funds, land-value capture and the tools to generate wealth to be able to shape our economies as opposed to just spending on our economies. That is really important.

There is a case for wider regional areas, but they work better when they are almost confederal, where the people from those areas come together as opposed to being a separate body that is driven by central Government Departments. I am not sure what they add on that basis. We work terrifically well as the M9, as Tim said. The functional economic area is, in the end, the functional economic area, and we should carve nature at the joints.

Q87 **Judith Cummins:** In the last few weeks we have seen the Government and their dealings with metro Mayors go through some turbulent times, I would say, as an MP for a region without a metro Mayor. Can you tell me a bit more about your dealings with Government over the last few days and weeks? Have the Government demonstrated enough good faith in their ability to work with local leaders? Crucially, do you have confidence in their willingness and ability to deliver on the levelling-up agenda that we so desperately need in the north?



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**Steve Rotheram:** It is a pity Andy is not here to answer that, because his experiences were very different from ours in the Liverpool City Region, because we knew we were going into tier 3 from day one. Our discussions were more about what we need to do to ensure that we get the wider business support package.

In terms of the way that the Government have gone about this, I coined a phrase, although I saw it graffitied on a wall in Manchester, that the north cannot become a petri dish for central Government experimentation. Sometimes we feel like that is exactly what is happening to us. Andy and I speak nearly every single day, and his fight is certainly the same fight that we have in Liverpool City Region and we will stand shoulder to shoulder with our brothers and sisters in Greater Manchester, because it was the right thing for them to do. We had to fight our own battle and we had different circumstances, so we went about it much more quickly and concluded things more quickly, but it should not be like that.

If there is to be a genuine partnership, as the Government keep telling us there will be, between regions and central Government, you cannot choose to try to pick areas off one by one and do deals with each area. It should have been a much more formulaic way in which they could come to the same conclusions. I genuinely think it is unfortunate, but what has happened is it has demonstrated the importance of having that co-ordinated voice around a metro Mayor. That might mean, in the future, that we go from strength to strength, but it should not have happened in the way in which it did happen. I regret the way that the Government have treated Greater Manchester.

**Chair:** We will have to bring the session to an end. I should have said at the beginning that, as the Chair, I like to have gender-balanced panels. Clearly, there are no female metro Mayors, which is the reason why we have had a manel today; I just wanted to put that on record. Thank you, gentlemen, for your contributions today. Thank you to my colleagues.