

# **Royal Town Planning Institute – Ambitions for the North: People and Place**

## **Call for Evidence**

### **Submission by Yorkshire Universities**

**February 2019**

#### **1. Background**

1.1 There is an emerging consensus that a ‘Great North Plan’ for the north of England could provide a co-ordinated strategy in which public and private sectors plan and invest for the long-term in key infrastructure and other economic, social and environmental assets. Consultation in 2015 gathered evidence for what such a plan might look like. Seven workstreams resulted, one of which is the framework for ‘people and place’. The current call for evidence, led by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), seeks as an output a ‘non-statutory spatial framework for the North’. The RTPI says that this should be ‘transformative, strategic and influential’, shaping ‘progressive spatial planning’ to support ‘the building of prosperous, healthy and sustainable communities across the Northern Powerhouse’. The framework should ‘work across a wide range of existing geographies and organisations’, delivering ‘something additional’ and ‘pan-northern’.

1.2 Six roundtables are underway, all focused on how to improve ‘places and quality of life’. These cover: demographic change; housing quality and affordability; the future of town centres; northern assets; commerce, jobs and the fourth Industrial Revolution; rural and coastal. In addition, there are a number of cross-cutting issues’ (or ‘influences’) grouped under the ‘prisms’ of social, technical, economic, environmental and political’. Yorkshire Universities welcomes the inclusive definition of ‘infrastructure’ to include transport and other physical assets, and recognition that the development of ‘good’ jobs, skilled individuals and an enhanced quality of life are essential ingredients for long-term prosperity.

#### **2. Yorkshire Universities**

2.1 Yorkshire Universities (YU) is a regional higher education (HE) association representing eleven universities and one specialist higher education institution (HEI). Our members are the universities of Bradford, Huddersfield, Hull, Leeds, Leeds Beckett, Leeds Trinity, Leeds Arts, Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam, York, and York St John – as well as the Leeds College of Music. YU thus covers a diverse range of institutions and HE provision.

2.2 YU embeds collaborations between universities in Yorkshire based on a shared mission to strengthen the contribution that universities make (individually and collectively) to the economic, social, cultural and civic life of places in Yorkshire. YU recognises the diversity and distinctiveness of different economic geographies within Yorkshire but also identifies the shared opportunities and challenges facing places and institutions in the region, which can be best addressed through co-ordination and partnership. Universities anchored in communities that face profound challenges are vital to building resilient places.

2.3 Given the range of opportunities and challenges facing the north of England, it is important to stress the diversity of the HE sector, especially in Yorkshire, which reflects YU's membership. Different universities bring to bear different strengths and assets, which collectively are critical to the long-term success and cohesion of economies and societies.

2.4 YU's strategic focus on place-based development, drawing upon the broader economic and societal role of our members, recognises the government's vision for the UK Industrial Strategy and local industrial strategies to help tackle spatial disparities. Increasingly, YU members have adopted a global perspective, but they also remain firmly-embedded in local economies and communities, working with public and private sector actors of all sizes and types. Our members are vital anchor institutions driving local and regional growth within and across Yorkshire.

2.5 YU is charged with bringing together and harnessing the scale and capacity of its member institutions, drawing upon teaching, knowledge exchange and inter- and cross-disciplinary research strengths. We need to identify the specific interventions that present the best opportunity to address spatial disparities in the UK, especially in Yorkshire and, by extension, elsewhere in the north. These disparities are some of the widest amongst Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member economies.

2.6 YU welcomes the work co-ordinated by the RTPI. Below, we summarise some of the particular contributions that HE can make to achieving the outcomes intended by the initiative, cross referencing, where appropriate, to the STEEP matrix included in the 'Call for Evidence'. For ease of reference, we have done this by numbering the columns 1-7, the rows A-F and including the number and letter combination next to the subtitles below.

### **3. Universities as a source of knowledge: F7**

3.1 Universities are well-positioned to provide the authoritative evidence-base necessary to support the development of places. Different forms of knowledge extend beyond a relatively narrow set of data linked to traditional factors of production to include a broader array of intelligence addressing wider societal opportunities and challenges, including, for example, the challenges of an ageing society, of achieving clean growth and building social renewal. To address such challenges involves transcending individual disciplinary and policy perspectives and working with other partners, such as civic leaders, businesses, community groups and the third sector. By harnessing the expertise of universities, decision-makers can develop a granular understanding of such issues.

3.2 Universities are acutely-aware of the conditions of the places in which they are located and the impacts their business activities and research have on local communities and economies. Five core dimensions include employment, procurement, land and assets, service delivery and civic contribution. These are all in addition to, and stem from, what has been seen as the more 'traditional' roles of universities in teaching students, research, and working with business. Universities increasingly see their roles as locally and regionally-significant, developing partnerships accordingly with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), Combined Authorities and Metro Mayors.

#### **4. The economic impact of universities: C6; F6**

4.1 Universities generate significant economic impact on the places in which they are based. In the case of Yorkshire, YU's members:

- Collectively, directly-employ the equivalent of over 30,000 full-time workers with a further 26,000 supported via the HE supply chain and through the expenditure of staff and students; this is a conservative estimate since it excludes any expenditure impacts from students already resident in the region.
- Pay an average annual gross salary of £40,000 per directly-employed person (compared to an average salary of £27,000 in the region).
- Contribute, as a group, £2.9 billion towards Yorkshire's gross value added (GVA).
- Spend approximately £250 million within the region on suppliers, the equivalent of 4,750 jobs.<sup>1</sup>
- Educate 180,000 students of whom 61,000 live in the region; their spending supports nearly 10,000 jobs in the region (again the basis for this is conservative since it captures the impact of the spend only of those who moved to the region to study).

4.2 Universities also have a less direct but nevertheless significant impact on economic infrastructure. Their human resource strategies help not only to recruit and retain staff but also to grow and retain local wealth, reducing poverty and creating ladders of opportunity for local people. Contracting with local suppliers builds responsive supply chain relationships, delivering quality and value; this also grows local businesses. Working with local and regional businesses to drive innovation helps firms to prosper commercially and enhances the relationship between business and universities, and supports more effective research and knowledge exchange. In these ways developing universities' core business supports inclusive growth within the community, demonstrating further the 'anchor' role universities play in their localities and wider regions.

#### **5. The civic impact of universities: F1; F2**

5.1 In their estates and campuses, universities have a visible presence within their immediate communities; all institutions can point towards the transformative effect of their buildings and other physical resources. The size and scale of new investments in major cities and towns in Yorkshire and the north of England has been driven by universities investing heavily in their physical assets, and integrating these with other place-based economic development initiatives.

5.2 As part of the RTPI's Ambitions for the North project, the 'future of town centres' workshop included 'redefining the cultural, leisure and tourism offers of centres'. Universities have long been active in supporting such 'offers'. Examples include public lectures, concerts,

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<sup>1</sup> Jobs are calculated as full-time equivalents; the figures quoted are for the 2017-18 academic year; the source is research commissioned by Yorkshire Universities.

exhibitions and making specific investments to enhance the 'heritage' of a town or city, thereby adding to cultural and creative renaissance.

5.3 Anchor institutions are arguably more significant when located in places that are faced with major socio-economic challenges. In a period of uncertainty and change, and with the UK seeking urgent answers as to how best to tackle widening spatial imbalances, 'anchors' need to remain strong and embed a civic purpose within their 'core business'.

## **6. Universities' contribution to skills development: C3; C4; C6**

6.1 The RTPI's 'Ambitions for the North' documents draw attention to the 'relatively low skills base and educational attainment' in the north of England. Universities address this in many ways. They work with local schools to increase access to higher education (especially for under-represented groups). Through undergraduate recruitment processes they attract students to towns or cities, helping to develop individuals into productive and highly-skilled people. Graduates not only contribute to building 'high-skilled economies' but they benefit society in other ways; they have better health chances, show more community engagement and are more likely to volunteer.

6.2 The north of England needs to retain its graduates and the availability of appropriate jobs is important in achieving this; the various factors in the 'People and Place' agenda are connected in complex ways:

- In 2016/17 there were almost 64,000 graduates in Yorkshire, of which 38,000 were qualifying for their first degrees.
- 50% of all level graduates who studied in Yorkshire found employment in the region.
- 71% of students originally from Yorkshire found employment in the region.
- 96% of students leaving higher education in Yorkshire were in work or undertaking further study six months after graduation.

## **7. Cross regional cooperation: C7; F7**

7.1 The 'Blueprint for a Great North Plan' proposes that 'five Core Cities' should take the lead in producing a Great North Plan, engaging with 'businesses, universities, their wider city-regions, and the many smaller towns and cities that lie outside administrative city-region boundaries'. It is important that the plan recognises the distinct but complementary role of core cities/city-regions, and other cities, towns and settlements, including those within rural and coast environments.

7.2 All organisations are used to working within boundaries that are familiar to them; we all face challenge in transcending familiar sector and spatial boundaries and discovering new shared interests. Universities work locally, regionally and internationally. Through initiatives, such as the Northern Powerhouse, universities are also working more collaboratively within

and across the north of England. YU is a place-based university partnership that has brought together a diverse HE sector in Yorkshire for three decades. When it comes to utilising directly the benefits of university place-based collaborations, for the purposes of helping regions and localities to build more prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economies and communities, Yorkshire is ahead of the curve compared to many other places in the country.

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