

James Farrar  
Chief Executive  
York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership  
The Lodge  
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Dear James

**Re: York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Industrial Strategy**

Yorkshire Universities' (YU) core mission is to widen and deepen the contribution of the higher education (HE) sector to place-based development, and to build strong and effective relationships with public, private and voluntary sector partners. In doing so, we welcome the frameworks that the UK Industrial Strategy and local industrial strategies (LISs) have provided.

The University of York and York St John University are key members of YU; a regional partnership of twelve universities/HE institutions in Yorkshire and the Humber with a shared commitment to building a more productive, inclusive and sustainable regional economy. Our members are also part of a wider HE eco-system in the north of England that is central to driving long-term growth, well-being and prosperity.

I am writing to offer some comments on the draft York, North Yorkshire and East Riding (YNYER) LIS. These are designed to complement the responses submitted by the University of York and York St John University. We have consulted both institutions during the preparation of this letter.

YU supports the development of long-term, 'place-sensitive' development strategies in localities and regions. It is right that the YNYER LIS should seek to build on distinct local assets and strengths, but also create the conditions for York and North Yorkshire to chart a new path towards greater prosperity and wealth. At the same time, the LEP and its partners do recognise the importance of the sub-region's relationships with other LEP areas, including Leeds City Region, the Humber, Sheffield City Region and Tees Valley. Multi-level and multi-layered geographies reflect the realities of business markets, supply chains and labour markets – helping to strengthen connections in Yorkshire and across the north of England. This means that institutional relationships will become more important given the government's intention to end over-lapping LEP boundaries.

It is right that a focus on de-carbonisation should be given prominence in the LIS. The aim of creating a new circular economy is a bold yet realistic objective and will help to create pathways to meeting carbon neutral targets. The University of York-led Science and Innovation Audit identified a wide range of expert facilities, specialised research and innovation capability, and industrial capacity in YNER, which is central to forging a world-leading bioeconomy based on agri-science, agri-technology and industrial biotechnology generating by-products and waste for use in new processes, foods, pharmaceuticals and other materials. At YU, we have undertaken a mapping exercise of our members' research capacities and strengths, including those at the University of York and York St John University, and our analysis re-emphasises the leading research and innovation strengths that exist within the region's academic institutions. This presents a strong case to the government to direct more research and innovation funding towards Yorkshire and the Humber, including YNYER. In turn, this provides a firm foundation for the LEP, universities, business and other partners to increase the pipeline of new ideas and strengthen the knowledge exchange that drive greater industrial growth and productivity.

In relation to the circular economy, we would encourage the government to examine what, if any, regulatory or fiscal measures or mechanisms could facilitate or accelerate the development of such an economy in YNYER, and leverage more investment in 'waste to energy / energy from waste' jobs and industry. Regarding business expansion and scale-ups, the presence of 'a world class business accelerator programme' in YNYER would bridge an existing local gap and presents a real opportunity. This would complement the excellence Product and Process Innovation programme led by the University of York, which has been providing practical support to the sub-region's and Leeds City Region's business bases.

Other priorities set out in the LIS are perfectly sensible. The focus on unlocking constrained growth in productive sectors by generating more demand for and supply of labour – such as retaining more graduates – is something we welcome. More distinct forms of infrastructure investment (such as digital technologies), which reflect the physical geography and settlements patterns in York and North Yorkshire, could help to stimulate latent potential or deliver new growth in key sectors and industries. We would encourage any place-based funding and/or private investment that the LEP is able to attract to recognise the value of continuing to invest in climate mitigation and adaptation measures – highlighted as a 'good growth principle' – to strengthen the resilience of York and North Yorkshire. Equally, a focus on improving productivity in job-rich, or foundational, but often low pay sectors, should underpin the ambition of YNYER to achieving a more inclusive and equitable economy. Health and housing also matter, as these interventions are felt directly by the majority of people. It is through investment in places and critical infrastructure within York and North Yorkshire that more and better jobs can be created.

We welcome the indications that the government is reviewing its appraisal mechanisms to identify how it can reflect broader concepts of wellbeing and social value when assessing 'returns' on public investment in the north of England. We would encourage YNYER LEP to engage closely with this agenda, in conjunction with other LEPs. The LIS should also support intra and inter-regional transport infrastructure investment – including backing a commitment for government to invest in Northern Powerhouse Rail and improve the

connections between York and North Yorkshire to Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle and Liverpool.

The University of York and York St John University provide tangible examples of how 'civic universities' support local and regional development on a practical level. Both universities catalyse strategic partnerships for growth. The two universities have direct interfaces with the City of York and other district authorities in a number of different ways, thus helping to create productive businesses and inclusive, healthy and vibrant communities. We support the focus in the LIS on anchor institutions – and the creation of anchors' network – in supporting the YNER economy. We would encourage the LEP to draw further upon the distinct contributions that both universities make to the places in which they are located. Working with and across different sectors, including further education, health and local government, impacts could be scaled up by opening up new skills development and generating greater returns from local job creation and procurement.

The long-term challenge facing YNYER and the rest of Yorkshire and the Humber is to increase the number of high-skilled jobs. The University of York and York St John University are central to attracting and developing talent and encouraging more young people to enter HE. York St John's role in the first Institute of Technology in Yorkshire is also enabling new and alternative skills and career pathways to be developed. The work of both universities in creating new relationships with business and industry to take forward degree apprenticeships is doing likewise. Creating more high-skilled jobs that attract and retain people with higher qualifications, whilst retraining existing workforces in order to obtain higher level and new technical skills becomes more acute when there is widespread evidence that 'knowledge and talent' are the most important factors in attracting new investment.

Finally, on a personal level, I chaired the independent expert panel that advised Leeds City Region and YNYER on the joint evidence base underpinning the two LISs. Officers from YNYER who participated in this exercise demonstrated real professionalism and ability when absorbing and analysing huge amounts of data, information and intelligence as they prepared policy priorities and potential interventions. I believe there are lessons here that could be built upon to support the future work of YNYER and other LEPs in the region.

YU stands ready to do all it can to support the University of York, York St John University and partners in implementing the final strategy when it is published.

Yours sincerely



**Dr Peter O'Brien**  
**Executive Director**