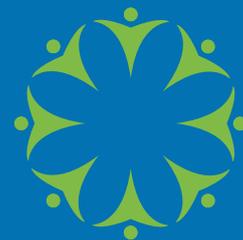


Universities and 'Place Promotion' in West Yorkshire



Yorkshire Universities
October 2021



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This discussion paper provides an overview of some of the key issues shaping the contribution of universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) to the promotion of place, and to attracting inward investment and increased trade into Yorkshire and the Humber, and in particular West Yorkshire. It should be read against the background of the government's commitment to increase total research and innovation (R&I) investment to 2.4 percent of national GDP, in particular as foreign-owned businesses in the UK spend more on this activity than domestically-owned businesses.¹ In addition, it also provides a contribution to discussions that have taken place at various times in the region as to how universities and HEIs help to attract and embed business investment and trade within and across city/sub-regions, regions and the Northern Powerhouse. The report also seeks to inform the emergent 2021-2025 Leeds City Region Trade Strategy.

This work is intended to stimulate debate and to provide a basis for potential actions going forwards. Overall, the region's universities are well-positioned to strengthen their strategic relationships with Combined Authorities, metro mayors, local government, LEAs, business and others, and to collectively showcase nationally and internationally the unique strengths of higher education (HE) in the region as an asset to attract investment and jobs. In particular, some practical and immediate actions could include providing a feed of relevant university-focused news reports for local inward investment web portals, promoting the local higher-level skills base, and utilising international students and alumni more strategically.

Introduction

Collaboration on inward investment and trade opportunities and place promotion activity between universities and economic development bodies in different parts of Yorkshire and the Humber – in common with other places in England – has at times been ad-hoc and patchy. This report suggests that adopting a more strategic approach to involving universities in place promotion activity within and across the region, aligned with broader ‘Northern Powerhouse’ or north of England initiatives, provides a firm foundation to widen and deepen R&I activity, especially within and across parts of the private sector in the region. This is essential if the government is to meet its 2.4 percent R&I investment target, and its overall objectives for reversing regional inequalities through levelling up are to be realised.

The relationships that exist in the region between universities and Combined Authorities, metro mayors, local authorities, LEAs and the Department for International Trade (DIT) provide a solid base to build upon. Stronger strategic collaboration provides an underpinning framework that enables quicker and more effective responses to investment opportunities

as and when they arise. It can provide a seedbed in which to stimulate the creation and incubation of new initiatives. It can also reduce duplication and inefficiency, and enable a more intelligent use of local assets, knowledge and expertise. Adopting a stronger strategic approach should start with a clear set of principles. In wishing to foster an effective dialogue between universities, Combined Authorities and other partners, we are not suggesting that complex new structures should be created. Instead, in outlining several additional steps that could be taken to strengthen the work between universities and regional and local bodies, and how YU might assist this process, we believe that these can be created using existing platforms and institutions.

In preparing this report, we recognise that advocating further strategies and/or actions should reflect the particular geographies in which inward investment and trade activity occurs, and which reflect locational and sector assets and opportunities (see page 19). We do not privilege one specific spatial scale over another, but instead situate different approaches operating at local and city/sub-regional levels within Yorkshire and

the Humber (such as West Yorkshire) and – on a wider geographical basis across the north of England.

Recent work has put the role of universities in inward investment efforts higher on the agenda. A statement by Core Cities UK and 24 universities called for a UK Urban Trade and Investment Strategy.² The National Centre for Universities and Business (NCUB) R&D Taskforce 2020 report asked government to develop a foreign direct investment in R&D strategy to attract more business investment to R&D in the UK.³ And Universities UK International are collecting evidence on the role of universities as drivers of international trade and investment.

More broadly, the UK Innovation Strategy has a section dedicated to attracting foreign direct investment, and the role of inward investment in supporting levelling up has come under scrutiny.⁴ The government launched a new Office for Investment in November 2020, focused on landing complex ‘top tier’ investments and the House of Commons International Trade Committee issued a report on inward foreign direct investment (featuring evidence from YU) in September 2021.⁵ A pilot round of High Potential Opportunities for overseas investment have been significantly expanded to include sites in Yorkshire.⁶ Leeds will host the inaugural Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiIF) in May 2022.⁷ The city (and wider city-region) have also attracted key institutions, such as Channel 4, the National Infrastructure Bank and the Bank of England Regional Hub.

Experimental data suggests West Yorkshire now ranks sixth amongst UK city regions for inward investment.⁸ Other initiatives in the region include the Humber Freeport receiving government designation in the 2021 Budget, and it will begin operating in late 2021. Freeports will be ‘national hubs for global trade and investment, promoters of regeneration and job creation, and hotbeds of innovation’. As such, the topics of place promotion and inward investment intersect with the levelling up agenda, discussions of place, innovation and of shaping the UK’s post-Brexit, post-COVID future. Now is an optimum time for universities to help drive these conversations in West Yorkshire.

Three Principles for Effective Place Promotion

1. Strategy and activity should reflect the unique regional context – from R&I infrastructure and physical assets to patterns of investment and trade. Regarding the latter, for example, the region's key trading partners are Netherlands, USA, Germany, France and Ireland – which differs from nearly every other UK region.² Yorkshire is the top exporter of manufacturing goods outside of London, and the region boasts the highest proportion of exports going to sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁰ And 58 percent of the region's exports are to the EU-27, compared to a UK average of 49 percent.¹¹ These patterns reflect activity pre-COVID and before the UK's formal departure from the European Union. However, early signs suggest the region is resilient and continues to be a favoured destination for inward investment.¹²

2. Ensure general good practice is maintained for attracting and managing inward investment. This means learning from the practical experience of seeing projects through from inception to completion, developing a greater understanding of why firms seek to invest in the region, and focusing on job creation as well as value added and job quality rather than simply the number of jobs created.¹³

3. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, place promotion activity should reflect and build upon existing activity and institutions at the local or city/sub-regional level, in places such as West Yorkshire, and align with strategic economic plans.

Part One: Current Activity

Currently, universities and HEIs in Yorkshire play a direct role in place promotion and inward investment by collaborating with Combined Authorities, Metro Mayors, local government, LEPs and others, including DIT. This often takes the form of providing evidence of specific R&I strengths, and supporting trade and investment events, such as MIPIM or Smart City Expo. These activities, and several others, are outlined below. Universities also have a vital role in place-making and levelling up, in the provision of education, skills and training, and working with local business, the public sector and communities to generate, co-produce and exchange new and emergent knowledge. Realising and utilising the contributions of universities towards place promotion is essential for ensuring future success in attracting investment and trade.



A Supplying evidence of higher education strengths

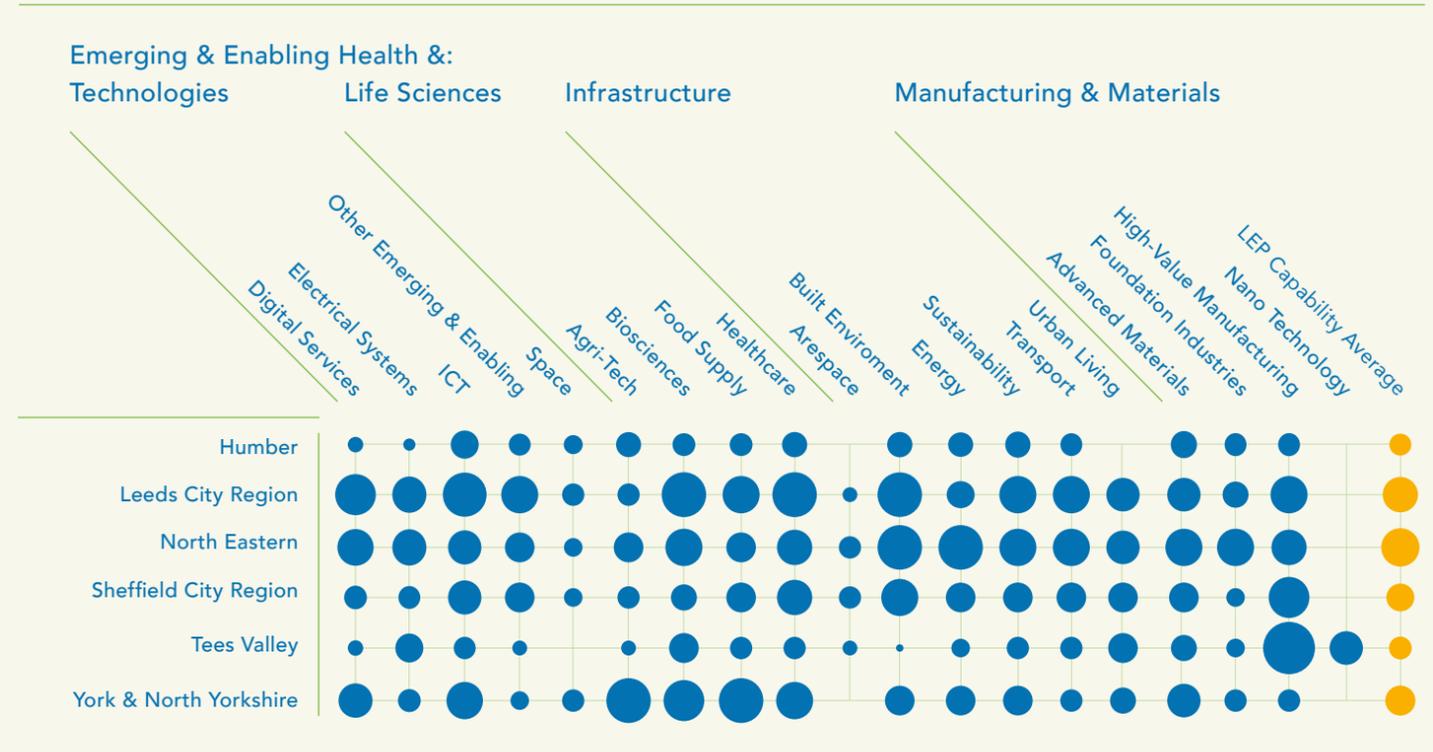


Figure 1: Innovation activity in the North East of England (source: Smart Specialisation Hub)

Yorkshire’s universities and HEIs possess numerous R&I strengths, which collectively form part of a distinct regional eco-system that provides a valuable asset to attract investment, trade and jobs. YU has been undertaking analysis of member R&I interests and strengths, drawing upon studies ranging from the 2013 Witty Review through to Science and Innovation Audits. In addition, work led by YU has mapped university research strengths in West Yorkshire and the wider Leeds City Region (LCR) to Industrial Strategy Grand Challenges (AI and Data, Ageing Society, Clean Growth and Future of Mobility). Further work is planned to update the mapping exercise across Yorkshire and the Humber against the seven strategic technologies in the Innovation Strategy. The legacy work of the former Smart Specialisation Hub, although a few years old, remains a valuable source of information (see figure 1).¹⁴

Mapping England’s Innovation Activity

Individual universities, HEIs and YU itself routinely supply data and information about HE sector strengths to (Mayoral) Combined Authorities, LEPs and others. This is often in relation to specific investment opportunities, in response to policy initiatives – such as identifying expertise in Grand Challenge areas – or creating and refreshing local strategic economic plans.

Some universities have strong bilateral relationships with their respective LEP or Combined Authority in the region and, as a result, information flows are effective. For others, requests for information from LEPs and/or Combined Authorities can be made at short notice or duplicate previous data collection efforts, and the outcome of providing evidence by universities can be unclear.

B Promoting universities within the LEP and Combined Authority offer

In general, universities and the HE 'offer' are mentioned throughout LEP and Combined Authority place promotion and inward investment materials in Yorkshire and the Humber. For example, universities are mentioned within the LCR investment guide, including in a dedicated section at the start of the brochure and a section on skills at the end.¹⁵ However, across England, promotional materials look remarkably similar, and are often a variation of 'we have X number of world-class universities with X graduates a year'. Investment websites often talk about the HE sector as an asset, without building on this with concrete initiatives or examples. This could either be the right model to follow because it works, or perhaps represents an opportunity for West Yorkshire to differentiate itself from the pack. The issue, therefore, is not a lack of references. However, if each region or city/sub-region adopts a similar approach, the differentiating factor becomes something else entirely. Here is when it might be possible to sharpen the focus and to make HE the decisive factor. A relatively straightforward means of addressing this is by expanding and improving the flow of news stories featuring universities on regional investment websites (see page 21).



Case Study: People Make Glasgow

Universities in Glasgow have a seat on many of the international decision-making and policy bodies of Glasgow City Council, including the City Marketing Bureau which meets every few months. One major campaign, 'People Make Glasgow', saw the slogan emblazoned on a further education college overlooking the city.

The University of Glasgow has brokered links between Glasgow City Council and other cities, from Pittsburgh to Tbilisi. Glasgow Economic Leadership, which provides leadership and direction to development activity in Glasgow, is chaired by the University of Strathclyde's Principal and the Executive Director is based at the university. Glasgow frames itself as the gateway to Scotland.

C

Contributing to MIPIM exhibitions

MIPIM, the real estate and place development exhibition held annually in Cannes and London, has been a major part of the place promotion activities of Leeds and Sheffield city regions. The Universities of Bradford, Huddersfield and Leeds supported LCR's attendance at MIPIM 2019. Huddersfield and Leeds were 'gold' sponsors, and Bradford a 'bronze' sponsor. COVID led to the postponement of MIPIM in 2020, and a scaled back festival took place in September 2021.

In Sheffield City Region, both Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam attended MIPIM 2019. Mayor Dan Jarvis' vision for a Global Innovation Corridor was the main focus. The Global Innovation Corridor aims to link the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District, the University of Sheffield's Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre, Sheffield Hallam University's Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre, the Sheffield Olympic Legacy Park, the National College for High Speed Rail, Barnsley's Digital Media Centre and Doncaster Sheffield Airport.

It would be useful to understand more about the return on investment for universities attending and supporting MIPIM and other similar events.¹⁶ These include the Smart City Expo (see box), and the inaugural Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiiF). UKREiiF will be hosted by Leeds in May 2022, and it is supported by the British Property Federation and the All Party Parliamentary Group for Regeneration and Development.¹⁷

Smart City Expo World Congress

The annual Smart City Expo in Barcelona attracts over 20,000 attendees and 700 cities. Leeds City Region is a regular exhibitor with the aim of attracting new inward investors and investment, given the strengths of the £6.5 billion digital sector in the region. The University of Leeds joined the 2019 delegation as a sponsor, showcasing facilities such as Nexus, the Centre for Immersive Technologies, the Leeds Institute for Data Analytics, and Pedestrian and Driving Simulators. York St John University, the University of Bradford and the University of Huddersfield have joined previous delegations. The smart city work of five YU members in LCR is profiled in the sponsorship pack.¹⁸

Case Study: The Waterline

In the Humber, the University of Hull has forged a close relationship with Marketing Humber and the Humber LEP with the ambition to pave the way in combatting climate change. A new long-term campaign, "The Waterline", aims to promoting new economic models that demonstrate how decarbonisation can deliver both environmental sustainability and economic growth.¹⁹

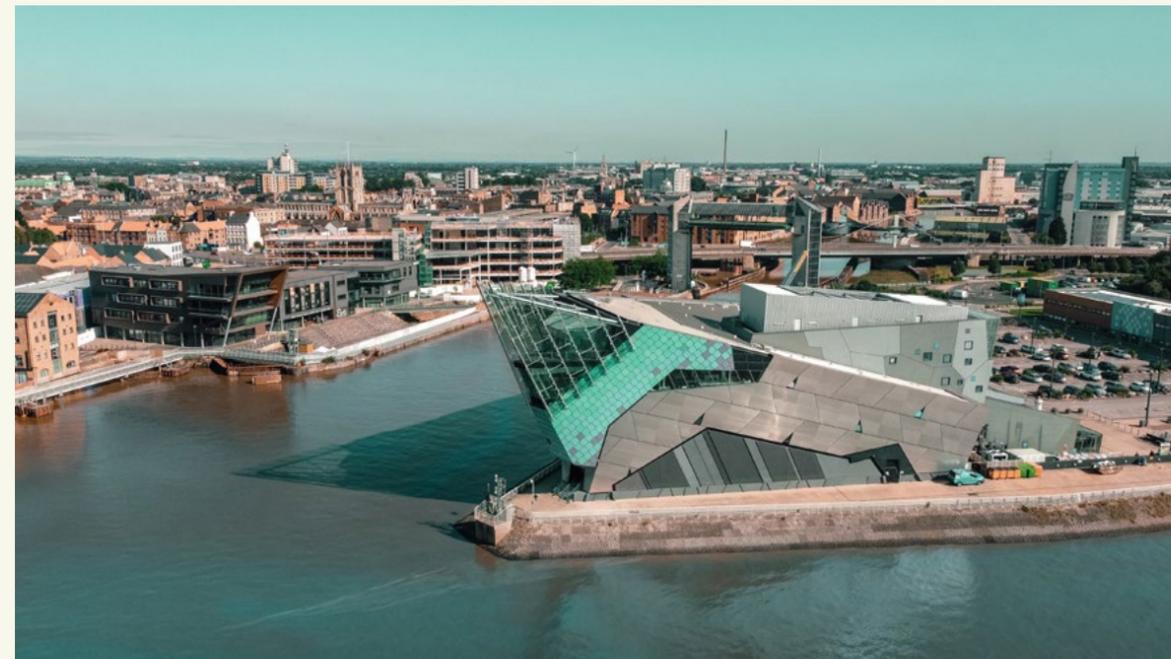


Image: Hull Marina

D City Twinning

Elsewhere in Yorkshire, Hull is twinned with several cities, including Rotterdam in the Netherlands and Niigata, Japan. York and Bradford both have twins in France and Germany. Sheffield's twins include Chengdu in China, Kawasaki, Japan and Pittsburgh, United States. Leeds is twinned with several cities including Hangzhou in China, Dortmund, Germany, and Durban, South Africa.

What does city-twinning mean for trade and investment? Civic leaders from the twinned cities of Leeds, Lille and Dortmund hosted a session on economic development at MIPIM 2019. Universities often have strong corresponding institutional links and can help drive closer connections for the region (for example, a visit from Leeds Beckett's then-Vice Chancellor to their partner institution, the Zhejiang University of Technology, was featured on the LCR investment website in 2015).²⁰ Student exchanges are also common.

However, there are other opportunities for universities and cities to increase their engagement with twinned counterparts. For example, Nottingham City Council has dedicated space for hosting three or four visiting staff from their Chinese twin city at any one time.

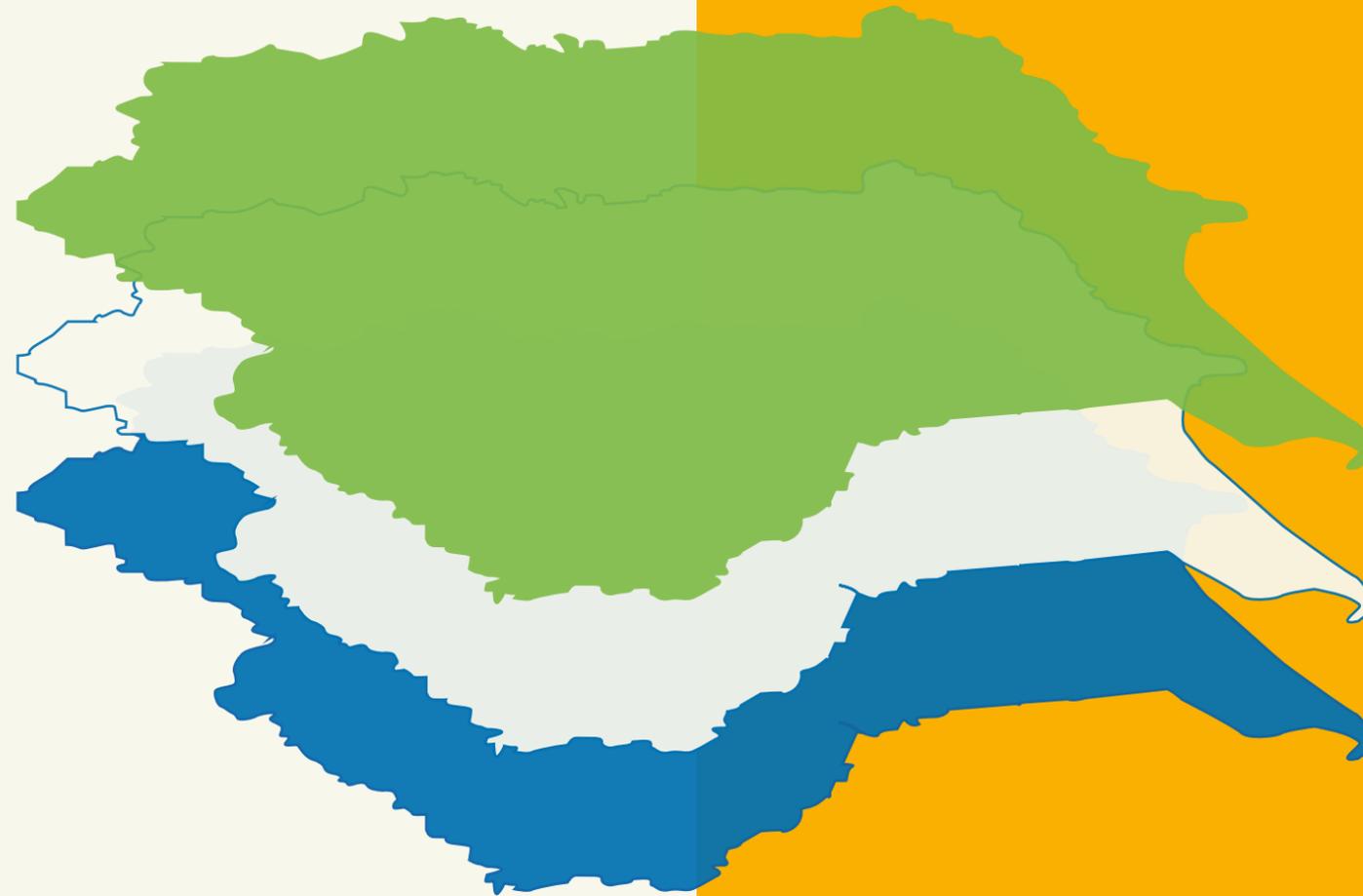
E Trade Delegations

In 2018, the LCR LEP arranged a trade and investment delegation to Hangzhou, Qingdao and Hong Kong, which was joined by representatives from the University of Bradford, the University of Leeds and the University of Huddersfield.²¹ The Welcome to Sheffield website has a dedicated page to relationships with China, and the trade body ran a trade trip to Nanchang and Hong Kong in 2018 aimed at local businesses.²²



F Place-Based Institutional Learning

Future territorial trade and investment relationships or initiatives can also be forged through different forms of international 'peer-to-peer' learning, with many examples facilitated by universities. For example, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) and LCR LEP were part of MIT's two-year Regional Entrepreneurship Acceleration Programme (REAP).²³ The programme provides 'expert, evidence-based guidance for teams to bring about significant economic and social change in their region'. The Leeds team included leaders from the University of Leeds, Nexus (innovation centre), the LEP / West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Leeds City Council, KPMG, Arup, Leeds Academic Health Partnership, and local entrepreneurs. The city joined Oslo, Guangzhou, Sydney and others as part of the sixth cohort of the programme, and it graduated in 2020.²⁴ Leeds hosted a meeting of the international REAP cohort in January 2020.



Multi-Level Geographies

The complexities of place and asymmetric governance can challenge efforts to build collaborative activity. From the town or city to the city-region, the region and pan-region, different bodies, such as local authorities, LEPs, Combined Authorities, Metro Mayors, universities and others have come together under the Northern Powerhouse, Convention of the North or NP11 groupings to work flexibly across and between different geographies in the north of England to drive economic success. Interviews with stakeholders undertaken as part of this review confirm that awareness of these complexities is high, but that there is willingness to adapt as appropriate, and to make the 'system' work better for places in Yorkshire, and the region as a whole.

The focus of many inward investment conversations is cities, metropolitan and urban areas. Depending on the vantage point of international investors, UK regions are considered fairly compact geographies. Connectivity and linkages between related and complementary assets within and between regions are likely to carry more weight with business than concerns about specific administrative boundaries.

Under previous administrations, the government supported a number of international missions to promote the Northern Powerhouse, and there was a collective scale and weight behind the concept: with the north of England producing 19 percent of UK goods exported and connections to the rest of the world through seven international airports and 12 major ports.²⁵ However, the current government appears to have cooled on the concept. In addition, the diverse geographical nature of the Northern Powerhouse area has led, at times, to tensions, and a view that the Northern Powerhouse is too 'geographically fuzzy with insufficient funding'.²⁶ Nonetheless, attracting more investment into the north of England is essential, and we would encourage universities in West Yorkshire, the wider region and across the north to, where possible, align complementary assets and work at scale to attract more trade and investment.

At the local level, focusing on parts of towns or cities can have particular resonance (see the example of Dublin's Smart Docklands on page 23). However, any local activity, whilst reflecting the current government's support for towns and so-called 'left behind places' should also recognise broader strategic economic plans given labour market, infrastructure and innovation geographies.

Part Two: Further Activity

In combination with existing activities, there are several additional actions that YU's member institutions could undertake to strengthen their work with Combined Authorities, Metro Mayors, LEPs and others to attract new trade and investment. Continuing to showcase R&I strengths and contributions towards talent attraction, development and retention, and in particular highlighting expertise that cannot easily be found elsewhere, remains crucial.²⁷

Building strategic relationships to increase foreign direct investment (FDI) more generally, and to boost the role of universities in place promotion specifically, takes time. Building these systematic links is key, and involves working with local institutions, such as councils, business, health sector, further education, LEPs and Combined Authorities, as well as the NP11, APPG Yorkshire, DIT and other government departments and agencies. In doing so, activities will gain more traction when they are aligned with local economic strategies and the government's business and innovation policies more generally.²⁸

As part of its own agenda, YU is in a useful position to continue to help facilitate these relationships. Encouraging wider and deeper strategic collaboration is a core element of YU's 2019-22 Strategy. In addition, there are five additional measures, outlined here, that could serve to promote collaboration and help to attract more trade and investment, and thus support the government's levelling up agenda. As an initial step, three actions could be delivered quickly: providing a feed of relevant university-focused news reports for local inward investment websites, promoting the skills base, and utilising international students and alumni more effectively.

A Present More Case Studies

A detailed but well-written case study, for example, explaining how a university based in West Yorkshire added specific value or solved a problem faced by a business, is persuasive.²⁹ There is a potential role for YU to curate and perhaps synthesise collective material on behalf of members, providing a regular flow of content for WYCA to publish on investment portals.³⁰

Across the UK, such articles on inward investment websites tend to showcase new buildings, new partnerships or projects, or high profile visits and events. What is perhaps missing are articles about local skills assets, or students (i.e. talent). These would complement examples of international relationships, of universities working with businesses, and could focus on sectors that are of high value or demand and seen as priority areas whilst showcasing the diverse set of higher education assets in the region.

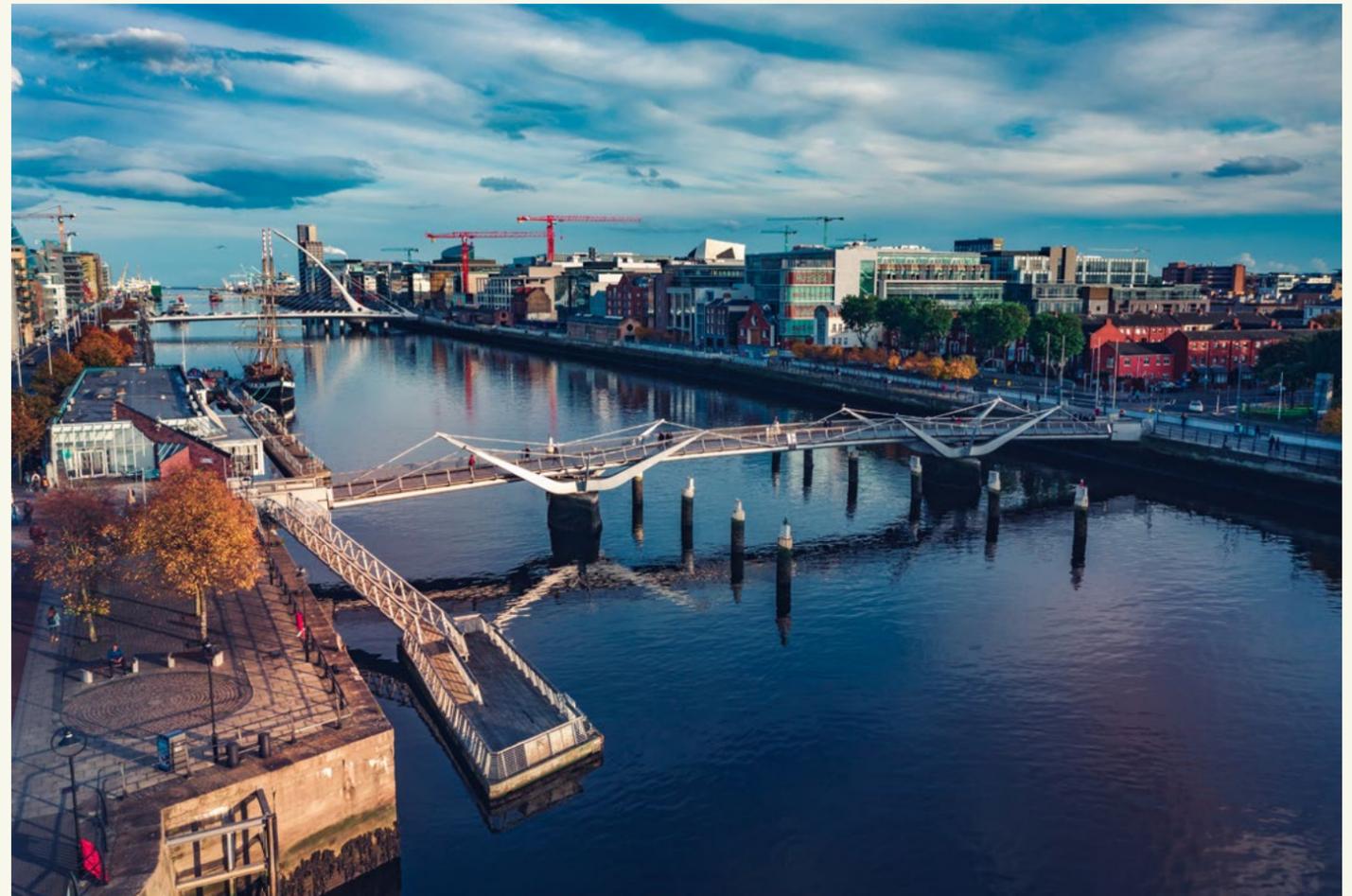
There are several benefits to this approach. A flow of up-to-date, relevant content reflects well on the local R&I infrastructure. And in time, a larger stock of content should allow LEPs and Combined Authorities to be even smarter about promoting their localities more generally, and the strengths and assets of universities in particular, by tailoring their content depending on who they are seeking to attract. By understanding the audience, investment portals can illustrate appropriate testimonials from that country or region or sectors of interest.

Advantages: cost effective and easy to implement. Would reflect and promote the diversity of HE strengths in the region, and latest activity. Can also use material for broader publicity and national-level profile raising.

Disadvantages: ongoing work to encourage the flow of material, and tailoring for publication.

Case Study: Smart Docklands

Taking a district-level focus, Smart Docklands is a smart city testbed, attracting large technology companies to set up European headquarters. The initiative is half funded by Dublin City Council, and half by CONNECT at Trinity College Dublin (via Science Foundation Ireland, itself via EU Horizon 2020 funding). Smart Docklands is looking to attract 3 billion euros of private investment by 2025, and currently produces 9 percent of Ireland's GDP and includes 44,000 employees and 26,000 residents.³¹



B Promote the Skills Base

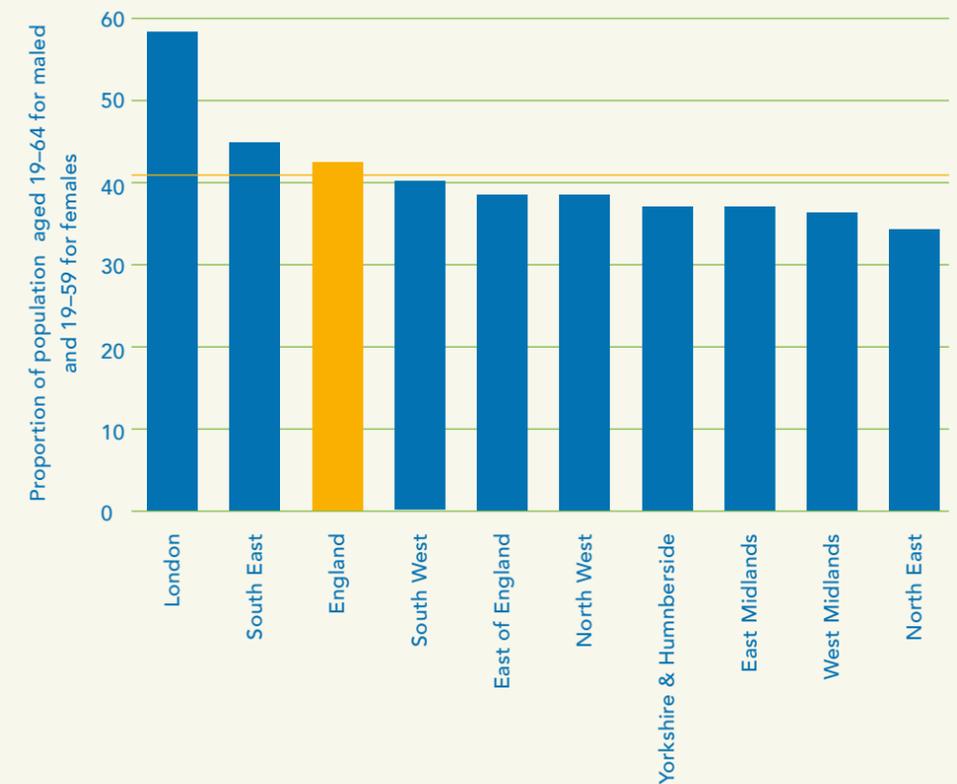
In constructing a trade and inward investment offer, UK regions have traditionally adopted a supply approach (i.e. “we can offer you expertise in advanced robotics”) when a demand-side approach can also be effective (i.e. “you are looking for a workforce skilled in AI and proximity to an international airport, which we have”).

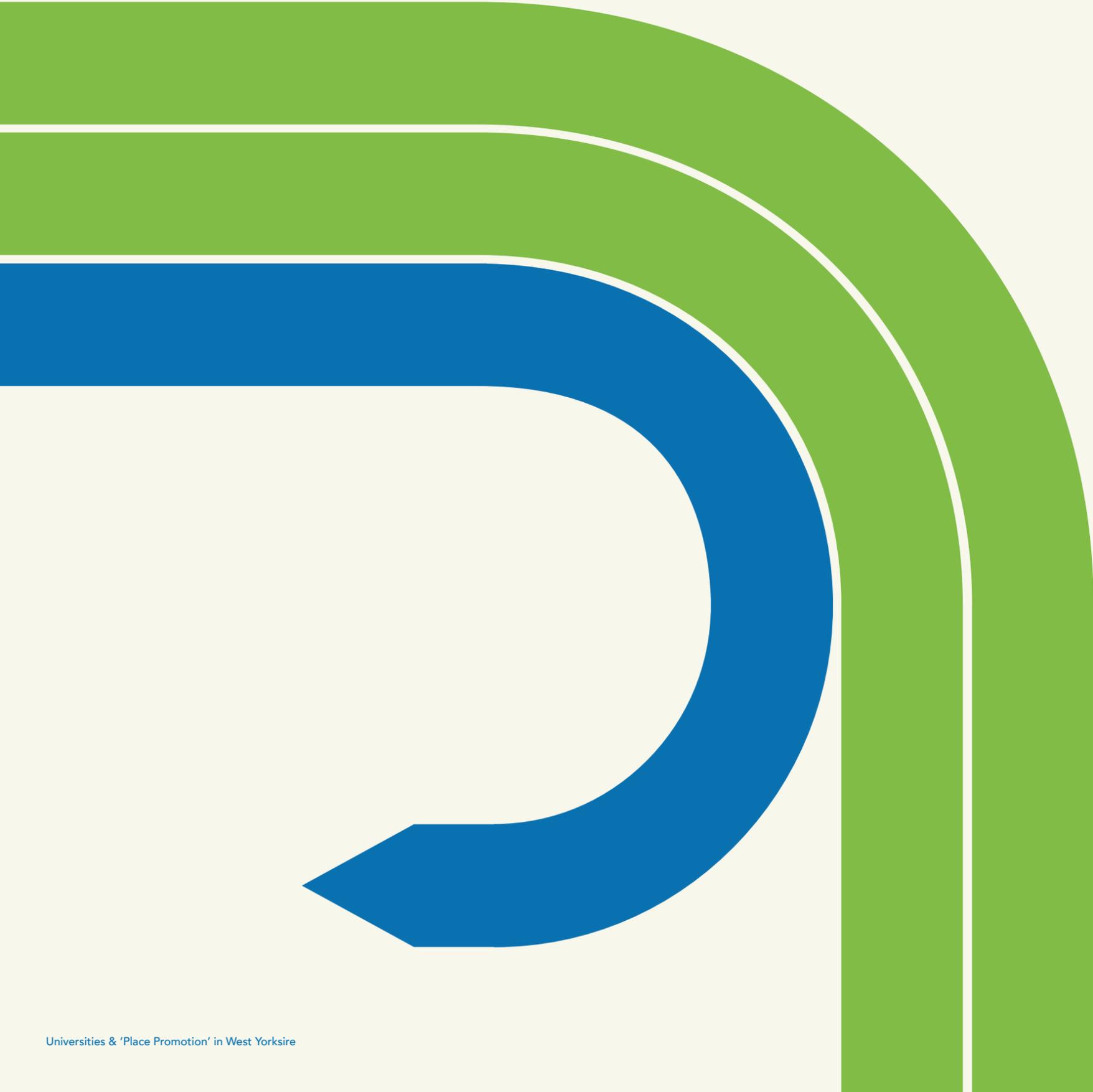
A survey of what investors in Scotland are looking for when considering investment opportunities found that nearly 40 percent prioritised the presence of talent and a skilled workforce in a particular region or locality (see figure 2).³² In response, the Scottish Government prioritises the development of cross-cutting skills – innovation, self-management and social intelligence – in its inward investment plan.³³ Sharing the collective skills offer of YU’s members, and data on the HEI contribution towards creating and sustaining a talented workforce (from sector-specific training to levels of graduate retention), could allow regional development and place promotion bodies to further tailor their offer to international businesses and join up the skills work in the region with promotional activity aimed at increasing investment.

Figure 2: Motives behind FDI projects into Scotland (source: fDi Intelligence in Universities Scotland publication ‘Grow Export Attract Support’)

| Motive | Proportion of FDI Projects (%) |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Skilled workforce availability | 39.4 |
| Proximity to markets or customers | 36.4 |
| IPA or govt. support | 27.3 |
| Domestic market growth potential | 21.2 |
| Infrastructure and logistics | 9.1 |
| University research/researchers | 6.1 |
| Industry cluster/critical mass | 6.1 |
| Lower costs | 6.1 |
| Regulations or business climate | 3 |
| Attractiveness/quality of life | 3 |
| Other motive | 6.1 |

Figure 3: Yorkshire has the second highest proportion of working age population educated to NVQ4 level or above in the north of England (source: Nomis – Annual Population Survey)





As research by Centre for Cities has revealed, Leeds welcomes more students to its universities, on a net basis, than any other UK city. Although many leave after graduating, around 30 percent remain in Leeds. These graduates, combined with graduates from elsewhere drawn to Leeds for work, means that, overall, the city experiences a 'brain gain'. Older graduates tend to leave the city but remain within a commutable distance.³⁴ And it is not simply a question of volume. Small, specialist institutions, such as Leeds Arts University and Leeds Conservatoire, are attracting niche interest and creative talent into LCR from across the UK; a key attraction for new inward investors, such as Channel 4.

Furthermore, schemes such as degree apprenticeships (DAs) represent a significant opportunity to attract new employers, widen participation in HE, improve local higher level and technical skills and bridge the gaps in educational attainment between the most affluent and the poorest students. They also catalyse new and better relationships with business and the corporate sector. DAs offer valuable choices and alternatives from the learner's perspective, while supporting wider vocational training needs, closing skills gaps in key sectors and helping to create and sustain more productive and high-value jobs in the West Yorkshire economy. Crucially, DAs have the potential to reverse the decline in part-time and adult study. West Yorkshire universities are actively engaged in the design and delivery of DA programmes, and many are national leaders. For example, Leeds Trinity University has established a Centre for Apprenticeships, and many others are featured in a directory of Degree Apprenticeships produced by Go Higher West Yorkshire.³⁵

Advantages: raise the profile of a vital but underserved factor influencing inward investment activity, and higher education's role in building skills capacity.

Disadvantages: availability of data (for example regional breakdowns of graduate retention information).

C Utilise international students and alumni more effectively

In 2013, YU ran a series of projects with the LCR LEP to attract inward investment. These projects included a scheme with DIT (then UKTI) to connect local businesses with an international student, who could provide intelligence, language and cultural skills to help firms break into target export markets. Materials were also developed for universities to share with international alumni to promote LCR as an investment opportunity.

Efforts were also made to share calendars of key international activities and delegations from both the LEP and local universities to build links and share opportunities, with YU acting as the secretariat for this mechanism. Similarly, YU agreed to source academic speakers with relevant expertise for inward delegations. Some of these actions remain valid. It may be useful to consider how alumni from and international students at West Yorkshire universities can be harnessed further and utilised collectively to promote the region and expand new opportunities. Advantages: could present a significant resource with global reach across many sectors, whilst strengthening links between the region and alumni.

Disadvantages: may require significant collaboration amongst members using time and resources, and potentially data sharing (with GDPR and other considerations).

D Produce a directory of local experts

Universities West Midlands has compiled a directory of local academic experts working in key economic sectors.³⁶ Related but more expansive discussions have taken place between WYCA and YU on how best to strengthen relationships with local academic experts in particular disciplines as part of a process of creating a stronger and more systematic policy, analysis and evaluation mechanisms at the city-region level. The new CAPE Regional Development Fellowship, working with YU and WYCA, is the next stage of building stronger and systematic academic research capacity to inform policy and strategy developed by WYCA.³⁷ Regarding a directory of academic experts, the Fellowship could adopt a similar approach as Universities West Midlands, or act as a conduit for enquiries into (or out of) Combined Authorities focused on R&I.

Advantages: relatively inexpensive to compile, and it would respond to common concerns raised by businesses and others that universities can be opaque, difficult to navigate institutions, and expertise is difficult to locate.

Disadvantages: difficult to keep up-to-date, difficult to ensure directory is comprehensive, and difficult to track successful interactions.



E

Staff exchanges and secondments

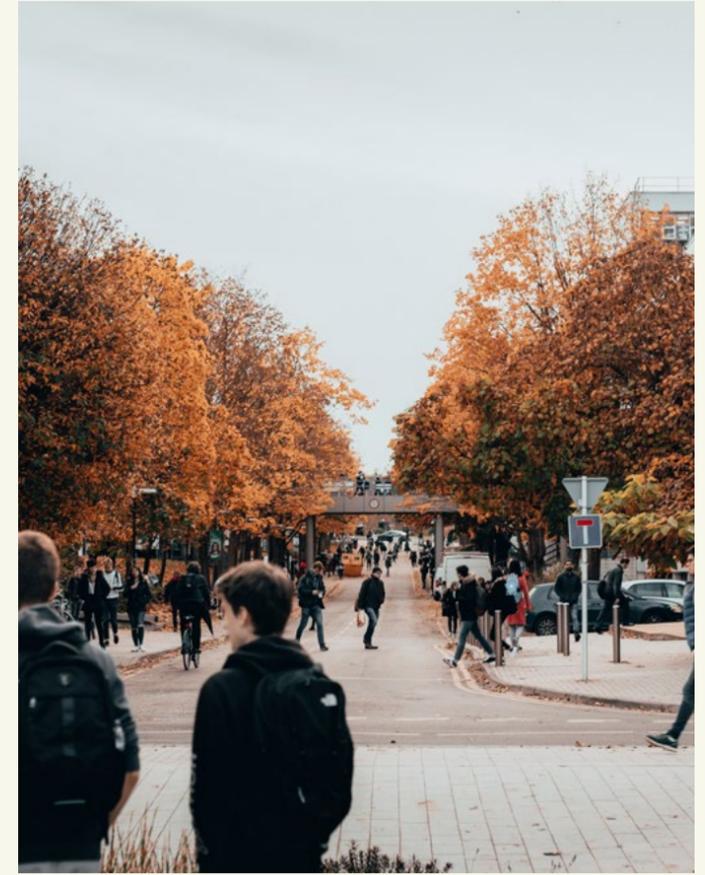
Staff secondments from member universities, or a jointly funded position in a local authority or a LEP or Combined Authority, focused on place promotion and inward investment, could accelerate work in this area, particularly if individuals have a mandate to implement change across institutions.

Such appointments are becoming more widespread in the UK. Nottingham, Leicester, Preston, Lincoln, and Essex have all supported positions or are establishing similar arrangements. In some cases, multiple universities have collaborated to fund a post (Leicester and DMU; Nottingham and NTU; three Lancashire Universities) or in other cases funding is split between LEP or Council and university with a post that is split between two (e.g. Lincoln and the LEP; Essex and the County Council, where a Chief Scientific Adviser has been appointed in the University of Essex to support the local authority).

Advantages: could potentially lead to transformative impact, if done right.

Disadvantages: expensive and requires existing strong relationships (as a result providing less benefit to areas needing more attention).

Case Study: FDI at Lincoln and Warwick



Two prominent UK examples of university-led FDI activity can be found in Lincoln and Warwick. The University of Lincoln, the city of Lincoln and Siemens are closely intertwined – from the School of Engineering to new facilities opening in the city over the past year. Spillover effects include skills festivals sponsored by the company.³⁸ The Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG) is the product of a long history of university-industry collaboration, and the recently-announced National Automotive Innovation Centre is a partnership between WMG at the University of Warwick, Jaguar Land Rover and Tata Motors UK, with £150 million funding from these partners and £15 million from the UK Government.³⁹

Conclusions: Reframing the Approach

The effective promotion of a place to try and attract trade and inward investment is not easy, but increasingly it is a critical tool of local and regional development, and it is an essential ingredient of the government's approach to 'Global Britain'. Mapping R&I strengths onto these efforts is complex: if we know, for example, there is huge demand from both AI and agri-food businesses to invest in the UK, do we map these onto existing areas of research and skills strength (à la the 2013 Witty Review), which might mean focusing on (for example) agri-food, or on emerging areas where newly-formed teams are developing new ideas – which might mean we focus on AI? Traditional sector definitions are becoming blurred and less reflective of new industries and integrated technologies.

Alternatively, can we promote places in Yorkshire and the Humber where the most exciting trans- or multi-disciplinary research is happening, bringing new people and ideas together? A White Rose Consortium (the universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York) project brought together industry and social science researchers to tackle industrial strategy Grand Challenges and could provide a model for further action.⁴⁰

Actions We Can Take Forward Today

Practical and immediate actions identified in this report include providing a feed of relevant university-focused news reports for local inward investment web portals (page 21), promoting the local higher-level skills base (page 24), and utilising international students and alumni more strategically (page 28). These are additional to, and would run alongside, YU's ongoing work to help facilitate relationships between HEIs/universities and Combined Authorities, Metro Mayors, local government, LEPs and others. Encouraging wider and deeper strategic collaboration is a core element of YU's 2019-22 Strategy.

Summary

In summary, we return to a fundamental issue with place promotion: hard data is helpful, but perhaps more important is a persuasive brand that reflects a clear and coherent offer to a specific target audience, a strong reputation (there is a growing literature on city reputation), and political backing.⁴¹ For universities grappling with a complex set of domestic policy challenges, choosing how to best support local and regional efforts to attract FDI may get lost amongst other institutional considerations.

However, issues of place promotion and inward investment are closely intertwined with the long-term sustainability and success of the HE sector, which in a post-Brexit and post-COVID era will be central to addressing the UK's fundamental economic, social and environmental opportunities and challenges. Place promotion and inward investment mechanisms at the sub-national level need to align with local economic plans and the levelling up agenda, the development of local and regional innovation ecosystems, and the civic university agenda. These form part of the wider environment that is essential to attracting investment and includes the local knowledge and skills base, transport, schools, culture, markets and networks.

There are already strong relationships between universities and Combined Authorities in Yorkshire and the Humber, including WYCA, but more could be done to strengthen these connections further for the purposes of attracting new investment. Ensuring these links are embedded and reflect a more strategic approach to place promotion activity can help the regional economy in tangible ways and ensure that the government's target of 2.4 percent of GDP investment in R&I activity has a beneficial impact for the region. It is an agenda that universities and HEIs in Yorkshire, and their partners, are ready to run with.

Endnotes

- 1 £13 billion versus £12 billion in 2018, according to the ONS (Nov 2020) [New Office for Investment to drive foreign investment into the UK](#).
- 2 Core Cities UK (Nov 2020) [Core Cities UK and 24 Universities Pledge to Work Together to Unleash Innovation](#).
- 3 NCUB (2020) [Research to Recovery, R&D Taskforce 2020](#).
- 4 BEIS Policy paper (Jul 2021) [UK Innovation Strategy: leading the future by creating it](#) (page 79); DFW (Aug 2021) [How can the UK make better use of inward investment to support levelling up?](#)
- 5 DiT Press release (Nov 2020) [New Office for Investment to drive foreign investment into the UK](#) and House of Commons International Trade Committee (Sept 2021) [Inward Foreign Direct Investment: Third Report of Session 2021–22](#).
- 6 DiT News story (Oct 2020) [Regional investment projects announced to boost local economies](#).
- 7 DiT News story (Oct 2020) [Regional investment projects announced to boost local economies](#).
- 8 ONS, [Foreign direct investment, experimental UK sub-national statistics: July 2021](#).
- 9 HM Revenue & Customs, [UK Regional Trade Statistics Commentary Q4 2019](#).
- 10 MHCLG Press Release (Aug 2018) [Yorkshire leading the way for manufacturing exports outside of London](#).
- 11 House of Commons Library (2020) [Statistics on UK-EU trade](#), Briefing Paper Number 7851.
- 12 Yorkshire Post (June 2021) [Yorkshire is ranked as a popular area for foreign investment](#).
- 13 Adapted from [Inward investment and productivity across sectors within the WMCA](#), a briefing note prepared by Nigel Driffield and Jae-Yeon Kim, Warwick Business School.
- 14 For methodology and industry breakdowns see the full report: [Mapping England's Innovation Activity: Refreshed](#) (2017).
- 15 [Leeds City region Investment Guide 2018](#).
- 16 Summary articles emphasise the importance of attending the event – for example [Leeds City Region secures success on the international stage at MIPIM 2019](#) – although universities are not mentioned. A 2018 Leeds City Region LEP board paper concluded that ‘based on conversations with representatives from Local Authorities in attendance this year, there is a strong appetite to continue attending MIPIM, and early feedback from private sector sponsors has been extremely positive’.
- 17 UKREIIF.
- 18 [LCR Sponsor pack for 2019 Smart City Expo World Congress](#).
- 19 University of Hull (Mar 2019) [The Humber sets out ambition to be decarbonisation global leader](#).
- 20 LCR LEP (2015) [Leeds Beckett University Strengthens Links with Hangzhou](#).
- 21 LCR LEP (2018) [Leeds City Region leaders visit China and Hong Kong to reinforce civic commitments](#).
- 22 SCR LEP (2017) [Overview of the Chinese Market](#).
- 23 LCR LEP (2018) [Leeds City Region team to reap rewards from MIT leadership programme](#).
- 24 MIT REAP Cohort 6.
- 25 HM Treasury (Nov 2016) [Northern Powerhouse Strategy](#).
- 26 G. Haughton, I. Deas, S. Hincks, K. Ward (2016) [Mythic Manchester: Devo Manc, the Northern Powerhouse and rebalancing the English economy](#), Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society, 9: 2, 355–370. Neil Lee (2017) [Powerhouse of cards? Understanding the ‘Northern Powerhouse’](#), Regional Studies, 51:3, 478-489.
- 27 [The Oxford-Cambridge Arc Economic Prospectus](#) produced by the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Universities Group provides a good example of how to showcase the assets of a diverse set of institutions.
- 28 For example, engaging in discussions regarding High Potential Opportunities (HPOs) and considering how Yorkshire could feature in further rounds. HPOs are government supported efforts to promote those investment opportunities currently disadvantaged by a lack of information, and which might therefore be overlooked by foreign investors. There have been two rounds of HPOs and several Yorkshire initiatives are included. These are promoted very visibly on the [government portal](#).
- 29 This Universities Scotland publication has some good case study examples: [Grow, Export, Attract, Support - Universities' contribution to Scotland's economic growth](#).
- 30 For example the news sections on the [Invest in Leeds](#) and [Welcome to Sheffield](#) websites.
- 31 For more information on how universities, communities, businesses and local councils have collaborated to create Smart Docklands, see British Council (2019) [Smart places – how universities are shaping a new wave of smart cities](#) report.
- 32 Universities Scotland (Sept 2013) [Grow, Export, Attract, Support - Universities' contribution to Scotland's economic growth](#).
- 33 Scottish Government (Oct 2020) [Shaping Scotland's economy: inward investment plan](#).

Endnotes

34 P. Swinney, M. Williams (March 2017) [The Great British Brain Drain: where graduates move and why](#), London: Centre for Cities.

35 Go Higher West Yorkshire directory of [Higher & Degree Apprenticeships in West Yorkshire](#).

36 [Universities West Midlands expertise directory](#).

37 Yorkshire Universities (May 2021) [New CAPE Regional Development Fellow with Yorkshire Universities](#).

38 FE News (April 2019) [Lincoln engineering festival sparks interest among young people for a fourth year](#).

39 [The Professor Lord Bhattacharyya Building houses the National Automotive Innovation Centre \(NAIC\)](#).

40 [The Business Boost initiative](#) is part of the former Industrial Strategy from UK Government to increase collaboration between researchers and the business sector to drive social change. Groups of UK Universities partner together to train students and doctoral researchers on how to make their work applicable to businesses, and broker relationships between them and external organisations to add value.

41 On political backing, consider for example the impact of former Chancellor George Osborne promoting Manchester in 2013, and the resulting visit from Chinese President Xi, new direct flight routes, boosts to tourist and student numbers, and over £3 billion in investment.



About this report

The aim of this report is to stimulate discussion and provide a basis for action. The initial audience for the report is the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, on the basis that seven out of twelve YU members are located in the city-region. The report builds on earlier discussions between universities and WYCA officials on how to create a more strategic approach to the role of universities in place promotion. The analysis and recommendations in the report have been informed by desk-based research and interviews with university staff leading on place promotion and inward investment activity, as well as regional officials from DIT and LEPs / Combined Authorities in Yorkshire and the Humber.

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About Yorkshire Universities

Since 1987, Yorkshire Universities (YU) has been the regional voice for higher education in Yorkshire. The twelve members of YU 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 Leeds Conservatoire.

More information about the work of YU is available at: yorkshireuniversities.ac.uk



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