



YOUR WMCA

in focus

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It's just over nine months since the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) was officially launched and we've come a long way in a very short time.

We're here to work together across different sectors to develop skills, create jobs, build homes and ensure our transport is better connected. We want to grow a more prosperous region where people want to live, work and visit.

Our three commissions are starting to deliver results, a number of major infrastructure projects are gathering pace and we have investments committed across our region.

The next few months will also prove to be fascinating as we continue to gather pace, work with the government on new devolution deals and respond to the emerging Industrial Strategy.

And in just over a month the region will make history as it elects its first ever Mayor.

OUR MAYOR. YOUR VOTE.

4 MAY 2017

BIRMINGHAM | COVENTRY | DUDLEY |
SANDWELL | SOLIHULL | WALSALL |
WOLVERHAMPTON



Help us to spread the message

We want to raise awareness that the elections are coming and inform people about the role of our West Midlands Mayor. Your support in spreading the word is very important to us and we'd be grateful if you could share this newsletter as far and wide as possible.

What are we voting for?

A Mayor for the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Who can vote?

If you live in Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall or Wolverhampton and are registered to vote you can be part of history and have your say on who is elected as Mayor.

What will the Mayor do?

The Mayor will chair the WMCA and work with local authority leaders and national government to ensure powers and responsibilities move from Westminster to the West Midlands. The Mayor will be integral to driving economic growth and creating a more prosperous region for its residents and businesses.

What powers will the Mayor have?

The Mayor will be an ambassador for the region and will promote the West Midlands nationally and internationally.

Initially the Mayor will control a £1.1bn, 30-year investment fund, an adult skills budget and have compulsory purchase powers over housing and planning. The Mayor will also control the consolidated transport budget, the local roads network, bus franchising and smart ticketing on the transport network.

The Mayor's powers are determined by the devolution deal that the West Midlands agreed with government; the biggest devolution deal in the country to date.

Who are the candidates?

Nominations closed yesterday (04 April).

The following persons have been nominated for the election of a Mayor on Thursday 4 May 2017 for the WMCA:

James Burn, Green Party

Pete Durnell, UK Independence Party (UKIP)

Beverley Anne Nielsen, Liberal Democrats

Sion Llewelyn Simon, Labour and Co-operative Party

Graham John Stevenson, Communist

Andy Street, The Conservative Party

You can find out more about the election by visiting wmcaelects.co.uk

Here are the dates that matter:

13 April

Deadline for people to register to vote

18 April

Deadline for receiving new postal vote and proxy vote applications

25 April

Deadline for new applications to vote by proxy

Initially the Mayor will control:

£1.1bn

budget

30 year

investment



adult skills budget



compulsory purchase powers over housing and planning



consolidated transport budget



bus franchising



smart ticketing on the transport network



the local roads network

Transport news



Swift continues to grow with refreshed brand

Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), the transport arm of WMCA, has started to switch all 9,000 customers on its nTrain direct debit ticket scheme from traditional paper tickets to the hi-tech Swift smartcard, which has also been given a fresh new design.

It means 12,000 customers now use Swift on rail, in addition to 130,000 who already use the cards on the region's bus and tram networks. More than three million journeys are made using Swift every month. The smartcard, which offers a range of ticket options including pay as you go for bus and trams, can be obtained from nNetwork travel shops or from myswiftcard.com

WMCA to bring Midland Metro in house

WMCA is to take over the day-to-day running of its Midland Metro trams from October 2018 when the current concession, held by National Express, finishes.

The move will enable TfWM to plough millions of pounds of future profits back into expanding the network.

Existing National Express staff will be transferred over to a new subsidiary company – Midland Metro Ltd – which will be wholly owned by the WMCA.

The combined authority is set to start a number of extensions which will see the tram network triple in size over the next decade, with passenger numbers forecast to increase from around 6.5 million at present to more than 30 million.

That is expected to generate profits of around £50 million over the first 11 years which the WMCA will be able to channel back into the network for the benefit of passengers and the local economy.

HS2 Royal Assent

It's full steam ahead for the WMCA's plans to use HS2 as a catalyst for economic growth after the high speed rail line between the West Midlands and London was given Royal Assent.

The authority's HS2 Growth Strategy, which has support from central Government and HS2 Ltd, is set to deliver 104,000 jobs, 2,000 apprenticeships, an increase in skills and additional support for local businesses. It will also improve accessibility by connecting more than two million people to the two HS2 station sites in central Birmingham and Solihull.

More for you

Growth Company

The WMCA is to establish a growth company to promote the region around the world and support the authority's Strategic Economic Plan.

The company will help create new jobs, expand existing businesses and promote the region's considerable business and tourism assets to secure investment from overseas.

Walking out of Darkness event - 6 May

The WMCA has announced plans for Walking out of Darkness, an awareness raising charity event for mental health and suicide prevention.

The Birmingham 10 mile walk, on Saturday, 6 May, and another in London, the following Saturday, 13 May, mark the start and finish of Mental Health Awareness Week.

Mental illness and suicide can touch anyone in every walk of life, not only families but the wider business community - with every suicide by someone of working age having an overall cost to the UK economy exceeding £1.6 million.

One in four people in the UK is directly affected by poor mental health wellness.

People who want to register for the walk or organisations interested in exhibiting at the Mental Health Festival on the day can find details at walkingoutofdarkness.com

Commissions update:

Mental Health Commission

The WMCA has commissioned research in to mental health and its impact on the public sector. It is believed this commission is the first of its type in the country.

The commission is chaired by Norman Lamb MP, former minister of state for care and support.

The commission published its Action Plan, Thrive West Midlands, in January 2017.

The commission has considered evidence from around the West Midlands region and beyond and the experiences of real people with real mental health experiences, as well as the knowledge of professional mental health practitioners and mental health organisations.

Productivity and skills commission

The Productivity and Skills Commission has been set the task of understanding the true extent of the productivity challenge in the West Midlands, identifying the component causes and making recommendations to address the issues identified. The Commission aims to:

- Understand the component causes of the productivity challenge and the inter-relationships between them
- Make recommendations as to how these individual causes can be addressed
- Ensure appropriate plans are developed for the implementation of these recommendations and monitoring systems exist to review their effectiveness.

Today (05 April) the commission launched its Call for Evidence which can be found [here](#).

Land Commission

The role of the West Midlands Land Commission is to take a fresh look at matters affecting the West Midlands land supply. It will consider what measures could be initiated and undertaken to ensure an improved supply of developable land which supports the growth ambitions of business, the housing needs of residents, and the future changes of the local economy.

The commission has now submitted its report which sets out a number of recommendations to help the WMCA and its partners meet those challenges and secure the economic opportunities that lie ahead. The WMCA will now carefully consider each of those recommendations over the coming months and will respond in due course.



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