

SIÔN SIMON **Manifesto**



Let's take back control of the West Midlands from London

The Conservative Government in London doesn't care about the West Midlands. They're not from here; they don't know or understand our place. Tory London is slashing funding for our region's schools, elderly services, NHS and police - while rich, leafy shires down South get more.

There's only one solution: we've got to take back control from London - and start fixing our region. We can run it better by running it ourselves.

If we're given the power and resource that are rightfully ours, we can do anything. We're the region that built the first steam engines, transforming the world, and 250 years on is leading the world's development of electric and driverless cars. It's not just engineering; we also gave the world Shakespeare, Elgar, Tolkien, George Elliot and Ozzy Osbourne. This is a place of genius.

My vision is clear: as we leave the European Union, I want to build a place where if you work hard and do the right thing, you can get on in life once again; earn a decent wage; find a place you can call home; rely on good local schools and a strong NHS, in a community not blighted by crime and drugs.

When I talk to people about their ambitions - and worries - about leaving the EU, top of their list is the challenge of creating new jobs that pay a good wage - and rebuilding the unity in our community that makes our diverse region an even greater place to live.

That's the West Midlands I'm from. The region I love. This is what we can do together.

- Siôn Simon



SO, HERE'S MY **10-point plan for the West Midlands:**

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c: Andrew Fox



MY STORY shapes my values

My family moved to the Black Country when I was a small child, in the 1970s. My parents were teachers, my Mum teaching French and my Dad teaching children with special needs. It was a Welsh family, with my sister and me the first generation to speak English as a first language. That's partly why education was so important in our house when I was growing up. Education, more than anything, would give us choices in life.

And my parents also believed that in books we would find kindness. And that was important in our house too. I was brought up to believe that the test of any person is how they treat other people. That we have obligations to one another, to our neighbours, our community. That looking out for the old lady down the street isn't charity – it's what it means to be a decent person.

But I was also taught to stand up for myself. That we're as good as anyone else. That you have to work hard to earn the right to a better life.

And I think those are also the values of the West Midlands region I know and love. I'm very proud to be from here. Our region holds an incredibly special place in the world – but all too often we don't celebrate where we're from.

Think about what's come from the West Midlands. Shakespeare – the most important cultural figure in modern Western civilisation. The steam engine. The Lunar men. Jaguar, Land Rover, Triumph, Jensen, Cadbury. The Spitfire – made in Castle Bromwich. George Elliot, the finest English novelist. Elgar, the quintessential English composer. Tolkien, that extraordinary global imagination.

The collective geniuses of the West Midlands were game-changers – global and historic leaders. We should celebrate this more. As Mayor, I will champion our region. If we were a nation, we'd be the 58th biggest economy in the world. Let's start acting like it.

We've got so much to be proud of. But we need to restore our pride and resume our place as the great engine of innovation, jobs and opportunity in the heart of England.

Growing up in the West Midlands, it was deeply ingrained into me that the worst thing you can be is a bragger. Well now it's time for us to shake that off. To take back control, re-find our pride and start shouting our story to the world.

#1

I'll fight for our fair share

My number one priority is to fight for our fair share as we leave the European Union.

I'll fight for our seat at the table. The West Midlands needs a place in the Brexit negotiations. We cannot trust the Tory London government to represent us. The Mayor needs a say on our behalf.

I will demand additional funding for the region, replacing that which will be lost when the UK leaves the EU. All funding that we lose from the EU must be fully reimbursed by the UK government - and we need to control that new funding ourselves. For example, between 2014 and 2020, the European Structural Investment Fund has allocated £177m to the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), £255m to the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP, and £136m to the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP.

This and similar funding streams must be guaranteed beyond 2020 and wholly controlled

within the West Midlands. In the past, EU funding came with too many strings attached. With greater flexibility, we can achieve more. So powers and budgets repatriated from Brussels must not then stop at London and never get to the West Midlands. That is not what West Midlands people voted for. We demand our fair share.

Our fair share of UK public spending

I will push the Government for tariff exemptions and the best possible investment conditions for the key institutions and industries that fuel our region's growth. That's the way to fight for international businesses with major West Midlands operations, like JLR, Birmingham Airport and HSBC - we have to find ways to make the West Midlands even more attractive as a business location.

And to pay for new investment to unlock our true potential, we need a fair share of funding. So, I've set up a Fiscal Commission to tell me how we

should change the Barnett Formula that delivers extra to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – at the direct expense of the West Midlands.

According to Treasury figures, Scotland receives £10,536 per head of public expenditure compared to £8,816 in England and only £8,750 in the West Midlands.

So Shabana Mahmood MP is chairing a Fiscal Commission for the West Midlands for me, with five objectives, to:

1. Analyse existing arrangements for government funding and revenue-raising for the West Midlands.
2. Compare current funding arrangements with similar places in the UK and internationally.
3. Consider the relationship between the economic performance of places and the fiscal freedoms that are in place.
4. Examine ways greater fiscal freedoms could be used to improve economic performance and competitiveness.

5. Identify the benefits, in terms of jobs and inclusive growth that could be delivered if the West Midlands has a greater say in how spending is financed and how that finance is used.

Fair funding within the West Midlands

This will develop clear evidence and a case for increased government funding for the region. I'll use the results to set out a clear roadmap for the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and further devolution deals - and develop proposals to make sure that the appreciation in land value that flows from infrastructure investment benefits the local community and not just private corporations and property developers.

I will make it a priority to negotiate with government to get funding for investment beyond the £8 billion committed already.

But I won't put a precept on council tax before 2018. And after that, I'll use every alternate source of funding first: for example land value uplift, pension fund investment, social investment and tax years increment financing.

Nor do I plan to levy a supplement on business rates. If it turns out we need it, it won't happen unless business agrees.



#2

We'll rebuild the West Midlands as Britain's capital of technology, manufacturing and world class jobs

In our region not enough people are in work – and especially work that pays well. So we'll set a bold ambition: to re-establish the West Midlands as Britain's capital of manufacturing and exports, the workshop of the world once more.

I'll set out my plans in a new and comprehensive Regional Economic Strategy approved by the business community. Business is the engine of growth and prosperity on which a good society depends. I know that. Most of my working life has been in the private sector, mainly self-employed. My commitment to West Midlands business's success is absolute. I will be closely guided by a high level Business Advisory Council. This will build on the best practice from existing initiatives - like Enterprise Zones and our excellent Chambers of Commerce. This plan will set out how we will overcome barriers to business growth: tackle traffic bottlenecks to reduce congestion; make sure land and power supplies are available for business; up-skill our people for the jobs of tomorrow.

1. A drive for the appliance of science and digital - for industries of the future

- I'll partner with employers and universities to drive forward West Midlands manufacturing. I'll fight to bring in new research, hi-tech skills and innovation as part of a new economic strategy for the region – including buy local clauses in public procurement and coordinated effort to strengthen local supply chains for key industries, such as automotive, energy and life sciences.
- I'll set a goal to make the West Midlands the global capital for electric car manufacture – pump prime the local market through additional charging infrastructure; and ask our world-class universities to deliver research that supports this business goal.

Digital technology can further improve our economic performance – as well as improve public services and strengthen communities in the West

Midlands. I will take steps to secure the gains of digital for the West Midlands by:

- Improved connectivity, which will, among other benefits, ease congestion by making home working more practical, through:
 - *Tackling 'notspots.'*
 - *Brokering a deal between BT plc and local authorities to provide better access to public property and land for the installation of broadband infrastructure.*
 - *Giving digital infrastructure the same status and focus as all other kinds of infrastructure. Network resilience, especially when upgrades are taking place, means better coordination across transport, utilities and digital infrastructure.*
- Establish a tech talent pipeline, following the model developed by Bill de Blasio in New York, with more young people enabled to gain key

#2 WE'LL REBUILD THE WEST MIDLANDS AS BRITAIN'S CAPITAL OF TECHNOLOGY, MANUFACTURING AND WORLD CLASS JOBS



digital skills, and more apprenticeships in the sector. In particular, I will ensure more girls are supported to develop tech skills. Let's get more women into tech jobs. This work on the tech pipeline would be a priority for the Commission on Employment and Skills that I will convene in a partnership between universities, colleges and employers.

- By adopting a radical and comprehensive open data strategy, we will become a region powered by data, unlocking improvements from transport to housing and fraud prevention. I will review current procurement arrangements to ensure that WMCA improves access to data in the most cost-effective, timely and transparent ways.
- Support innovative tech solutions which improve access to and the quality of public services. For example:
 - *Explore a teacher-to-teacher digital platform for sharing knowledge and experiences.*
 - *Develop apps that allow patients to better monitor their own health conditions and become expert patients.*

2. A drive for the infrastructure we need to succeed

I'll make sure we build the new infrastructure that will make us Britain's favourite base for exporters - and one of the world's favourite places to invest.

And I'll work with business to create a coordinated strategy across High Speed 2, the new HS2 college and the HS2 supply chain to make sure that people currently living in the West Midlands fill as many HS2 jobs as possible. Once in office, I will commission and publish a testing set of timed

benchmarks to this end.

I'll push for funding for HS2 phase 2, to connect us quickly to northern markets and ports. I'll make sure the HS2 growth board is chaired by the Mayor so I can put the emphasis on quality of jobs and social justice.

3. A plan to support our exporters

I'll demand that Government ends the uncertainty around the export support contracts for our Chambers of Commerce.

I want to make sure our exporters have all the help they need, so I'll work with the Chambers of Commerce to turbo-charge our effort, creating an Export Taskforce to tell me how we can do better.

- My priorities will include a coordinated push through diaspora networks to the great growth markets of the future - for example China, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the USA - flying the flag for the best of the West Midlands through better marketing the region abroad
- To help, I'll make sure we have a simple communications strategy
- I'll make sure that national and international investor and visitor strategies support the best of what's in place already.

4. A drive for inward investment

I'll develop the recently established WMCA Growth Company into a powerful inward investment body to maximise the investment we bring in from the world:

- I'll bring new business finance into the region from rapidly growing economies, such as China, that are seeking further international investments.

- Work with globally renowned business accelerators - such as Mass Challenge - that have expanded into new countries and ensure that the West Midlands is at the front of the queue for their next phase of expansion.

- I'll make sure we fast-track crucial new developments, such as:

- *Friargate: the stalled 37-acre regeneration area around Coventry train station that has needs to be jump started to deliver the City Council's ambition to create 3 million sq ft of mixed use development, with offices, leisure facilities and 400 homes - and which will create 15,000 new jobs.*
- *The extension to the i54 Business Park to bring thousands of jobs and apprenticeships to Wolverhampton and the Black Country*
- *The transformation of Wolverhampton City Centre and town centres that have been left behind, overlooked and neglected by developers wanting out-of-town sites, the development of which has stalled the renewal of once-proud towns*
- *The area around Bescot rail yard and Friar Park, creating a transport interchange, a rail-related manufacturing facility and hundreds of new homes*
- *The redevelopment of the Grove Lane/Cranford area around the new Midland Metropolitan Hospital in Smethwick for new houses and apartments*

5. A drive to buy local

I'll set out a new plan to buy local, coordinated by a new Mayor's Office of Public Commerce. This will give our small businesses a kick-start, creating more local jobs and retaining wealth in the West Midlands - especially with firms which do their bit and fulfill their social responsibilities. This new partnership with business will include:

- New ways for employers and universities to work together to buy more locally from our 95,000 small businesses.
- Identify where strategic supply chains are weak or absent in the West Midlands - and steps to strengthen them.
- Support FAB West Midlands, a global project to develop locally productive and globally connected self-sufficient cities.
 - *This will help us learn from best practice across the world to produce and source more goods locally, while generating knowledge and innovation to be shared globally.*

This shift towards self-sufficiency and business activity that does more to benefit the West Midlands will be enhanced by improved digital technology.

I will oppose Post Office closures and further franchising of our Crown Offices.



#3

We'll build a transport system to make the West Midlands Britain's export capital

To become Britain's capital of exports, we need the country's best transport – airports, high speed rail, buses, roads, trams, trains and cycleways.

To do better, we need to export more. That means we need a bigger port to the world: a bigger airport to compete with Gatwick and Stansted, linked by High Speed rail to the South and the North of England.

1. A world-class airport

So, I'll ask Birmingham Airport to bring forward a plan to build an integrated HS2 station and passenger terminal and safeguard the space for a second runway when needed, creating an airport bigger than Gatwick that helps create 167,000 new jobs in the region over the next 30 years. This would give the West Midlands one of the top twenty airports in the world – we deserve no less.

To help our exporters, we need to make sure every part of the region is connected to our new world-class airport.

2. Double the size of our tram system - connecting the region to HS2 and the airport

So, over the next decade, I'll double the size of the region's tram system building a fleet of 60 trams capable of carrying more than 30 million people a year. The key will be a new 18-mile Metro-spine for the region, connecting the whole region to the new HS2 station and our expanded airport. The spine will consist of two parts:

- A new 7 mile tram route for the south of the Black Country, from Wednesbury in Sandwell to Dudley Town Centre, to Brierley Hill in Dudley

The 7 mile route, replete with 21 new stops will run from the new Wednesbury Junction in Sandwell via our proposed new University Campus in Dudley, to Dudley town centre and out to the

Waterfront/Merry Hill and to Brierley Hill. Five miles of the route will run along a re-opened South Staffs railway corridor.

I'll defend this plan for the Wednesbury - Brierley Hill tram from the Tories who have promised scrap it.

My aim is to open it by 2023.

- An 11.5 mile new East Birmingham HS2 station to Birmingham Airport, via the NEC

This huge extension from the HS2 station in Curzon Street will connect the region by tram to the new business park around the HS2 station at Curzon Street, and the new UK Central business park around the NEC and the newly expanding airport (passing en route through East Birmingham and North Solihull).

In addition, we will build out three key spurs:

- The new Wolverhampton City Centre Extension

This extension will run from Midland Metro Line 1 on Bilston Street along Piper's Row and Railway Drive with new stops at the Bus and Railway stations - with the opening of the Metro planned for 2019/20.

- Centenary Square to Broad Street, Brindley Square and the Hagley Road in Edgbaston

The opening to Centenary Square planned to open in 2019 and the Edgbaston extension is planned to open by 2020/21.

- Birmingham Eastside Extension

Connecting the new New Street station and Grand Central shopping centre, out to the new HS2 station at Curzon Street in Birmingham's East side.

Finally, I'll set out the options to connect Wednesbury Great Western station to the town centre where I want a third platform into West Bromwich town centre.

3. New rail lines, very light rail and stations

I'll drive forward a programme of new rail lines and stations across the region to make getting around easier, including the development of:

- A bold plan to connect Coventry to the HS2 interchange station in Solihull with options like Very Light Rail – a world-leading technology being pioneered in Coventry itself
- The Very Light Rail Innovation Centre in Dudley
- New stations at Castle Bromwich, near the Jaguar Land Rover plant and reconnecting Fort

Dunlop to the rail system

- Two stations at King's Heath and Moseley on a re-opened line from the south of Birmingham, into the City Centre (the Camp Hill Chords)
- A rebuild of Dudley Port Interchange
- Upgrades to Sandwell and Dudley station and a new platform at Rowley Regis station
- Business cases from elsewhere in the West Midlands for new train lines – where businesses and communities see a case, including for a Walsall to Wolverhampton line with new stations at Willenhall and James Bridge to open up the Darlaston enterprise zone and the garden city ambitions for Willenhall.

4. An ambitious plan to cut congestion on our roads

Much better public transport can obviously take traffic off our roads. But we also need to look at the roads themselves.

So to beat congestion, I'll push the government to nationalise the M6 toll road so that all drivers can use it without charge. It doesn't make sense for the M6 and our local roads to be jammed when there is a toll road that is hardly used just a few miles away. This will improve productivity and job creation across the whole region. But it will bring the most immediate benefit to the economies of Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley, Sandwell and Coventry who suffer most and most often when arterial routes are gridlocked as a result of chaos on the M6.

Congestion costs West Midlands businesses at least £2 billion a year. The government could nationalise the M6 Toll at a one-off cost of £1 billion. It's a no-brainer.

I'll then make sure the connecting roads are better managed, with a smart road network created by connecting the Urban Traffic Management Control Centres across the WMCA, so we can share intelligence in real time and coordinate traffic lights on the 12 key road lifelines that keep the region moving. I'll ask the business community for their priority routes.

I'll tackle the region's congestion hotspots, forming an effective partnership to do so with road users, utility providers and local authorities.

Longer term, I will tackle congestion by securing the West Midlands' fair share of funding from the Midlands Connect regional transport strategy, intended to drive the economy and power the Midlands Engine. Delivery of the high-level Midlands Connect agenda for road, rail and surface access to airports and sea ports would deliver considerable benefits for Wolverhampton and the wider Black Country, in particular.

5. Fare's fair

For public transport to work well, we need fares that are cheaper - and simpler.

Today, the system is too complicated. So, I'll transform the simplicity of route branding and information - creating a Tube-style map of the whole transport system, including buses, trains, and trams.

To revolutionise our bus services I'll deliver my five-point plan for better buses:

- I'll cap bus fares at £4.40 for an all-day ticket and freeze this price cap for at least a year. The "fare's fair" rate will enable passengers to travel on buses and trams within the West Midlands.
- I'll introduce an integrated contactless payment system across the West Midlands public transport network, that in time will include all public transport.
- I'll deliver free travel on bus and metro for all aged 16-19 in FE College.
- I'll make sure there's a step change in vehicle quality with another 350 buses overhauled in three years - with carbon emissions reduced and air quality improved through more buses using cleaner fuels, such as electricity, hydrogen, or Compressed Natural Gas. We'll make sure this work is done here in the West Midlands while also fitting them with audio announcements and visible media.
- I'll extend overnight public transport to support shift workers and the night-time economy.

I'll establish RideShareWM - a portal for all car and bike hire and ridesharing opportunities, which will increase access to use of bikes and cars for all people in the West Midlands.

Regardless of the final shape of the legislation currently going through Parliament, we will seek powers to operate, first, a franchised bus service throughout the West Midlands, and ultimately an

integrated franchise across all modes of public transport. Bus franchising is the best deal for passengers. It's been taken for granted in London for decades. It's about time the West Midlands got the same deal.

6. A proper plan for cycling - and safety

I'll develop a proper integrated cycling strategy across the WMCA to better utilise our canals and achieve full cycle integration on public transport - including better way-finding, night-time cycling networks, bike racks on public transport and at public buildings, improved integration of cycle routes and facilities to rail and Metro stops. I would sign the Cycle Charter, meaning that we would aim to raise levels of cycling across the West Midlands Metropolitan area to 5% of all trips by 2023.

In addition to cycling, I will also support walking as a form of active transport - working with all Local Authorities within the combined authority to promote a campaign of encouraging 20mph limits in residential areas. This will include ward-level pilot areas for 20mph limits in each local authority to measure impacts on physical activity, active travel and road safety with a view to a wider roll-out later. The aim would be for these pilots to create safe walking routes that encourage more children to walk to school and bring more customers to local shops.

7. A system that listens to passengers

I'll make sure the voice of passengers is loud and clear.

I'll build on the work of the West Midlands Bus Alliance to make sure transport services are shaped by transport users - taking into account the voice of passenger and staff representation on oversight boards of regionally managed heavy and light rail systems.

In particular I want to make sure we hear the voice of disabled residents loud and clear, when we're making plans for new investment in transport, to maximise accessibility.

- And I will fight implacably to keep three fast trains an hour from Coventry to London. I'll make sure Coventry stays connected.

#3 WE'LL BUILD A TRANSPORT SYSTEM TO MAKE THE WEST MIDLANDS BRITAIN'S EXPORT CAPITAL

#4

We'll create Britain's best technical education system

We won't be able to give the West Midlands a pay rise unless we can raise our skills.

Within six months of taking office, I will convene an education summit involving all stakeholders. It will be tasked with developing an overarching plan to deliver an excellent education strategy for the region, including making the West Midlands an excellent place to live and work for teachers and education professionals - and recognising the education sector as key to the region's growth.

Our universities are a key strategic strength of our regional economy. We will work extremely closely and responsively with them to ensure that the potential threats of Brexit are turned into opportunities. Our great universities will be at the heart of the region's future success. I am very clear about that.

We will bring forward a new West Midlands Commission on Employment and Skills

(WM-CES), which will much more closely align skills and infrastructure planning. This will work in partnership with leading local employers, colleges and universities, to develop the skills that the West Midlands needs for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

We will seek oversight of the West Midlands' share of the new £2 billion Apprenticeship Levy, which we will want to see ring-fenced regionally; so that we can create one of the best technical education systems in the world. In this way, the Mayor will take responsibility for all of FE and skills training, helping businesses to create the best - and the best paid - manufacturing jobs in the country.

And using new infrastructure spending on High Speed 2 and spending on other capital projects and infrastructure programmes, we will help deliver 8,000 new technical apprenticeships.

Our West Midlands Commission on Employment and Skills will:

- Quickly undertake a Skills Audit especially in high unemployment areas, to pinpoint low skills, poor skills provision and training that is poor value for money, and which fails to help West Midlands residents find well paid work.
- Together with the Midlands Engine, the Local Enterprise Partnerships, business and regional skills stakeholders, quickly design a united, clear skills vision, tailored to the needs of businesses in the region, identifying the priority sectors in the West Midlands which would benefit most from targeted technical skills provision
- Take control of approving which technical qualifications will be funded for apprenticeships, to make sure we only offer world-class industry leading qualifications. This would build on the success of schemes like Walsall Works and Wolves@Work.

- Help our colleges specialise in the skills we need, by allowing them to bid to create specialist Institutes of Technology, alongside the new High Speed 2 College. Alongside the major house-building that we will foster, we will also support our colleges in developing associated specialisms and skills in modern construction techniques, such as modular housing.
- Bring together our colleges and universities to create new Technical University partnerships that offer an earn-while-you learn track to degree-level qualifications in places where upskilling is an urgent priority.

The Black Country lit the spark that fired the Industrial Revolution, changing not just the West Midlands or even Britain, but the whole of the world.

That's why we will take back control of skills budgets and work with Dudley College to deliver more apprenticeships, higher and technical apprenticeships and contribute to a £30 million university centre - a new, university-level technical and hi-tech manufacturing centre in the heart of the Black Country that will make Dudley a national leader of skills in vehicle propulsion, rail systems, digital engineering and more. The new centre will draw learners from across the West Midlands and around Britain, bringing together local universities to ensure our region has the skills we need to attract new businesses and new jobs in hi-tech industries in the future.

- We will work to foster a revolution in careers advice and guidance so that these new technical education options are well

understood by children from the age of 13, by supporting and enabling work connecting employers and educators, giving young people real experience of work before leaving education.

- We will help to ensure that our schools are delivering work relevant skills and attitudes by insisting to government that a specific West Midlands Regional Schools Commissioner (replacing the current geographically wider one) be appointed jointly by the Mayor and DFE and be accountable directly to the Mayor, with oversight from DFE.

In addition, we will develop an adult education strategy that supports the skills needed in the public, private and voluntary sectors – including returning to a focus on 'soft skills' and personal development. This would entail:

- Trying to set up a regional union learning fund. Trade unions have a great track record and an important role to play in lifelong learning.
- Deepening ties between schools and successful local businesses – including getting local business people into schools in a systematic new way and to an unprecedented extent.
- Strengthen initiatives linking health and employment – for example, scaling up the Individual Placement Service (IPS) model, including within GP surgeries, and extending to people with common Mental Health issues.
- Co-design of Department of Work and Pension (DWP) services to improve future employment support delivered by Work Coaches within DWP for all new claimants prior to mandating to the new Work and Health Programme. This would

involve a One Public Estate approach, in particular taking into account the DWP and FE estates, alongside local authority assets, considering public buildings best suited to become local Employment Hubs.

- A high profile public campaign to improve adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills as this remains a huge barrier to employment and progression.

Supporting working parents

In order to support working parents, we will:

- work to ensure that the West Midlands gets fair our share of money allocated for women's and parents returnship schemes, so that parents who have taken time out of work to care for their families have the skills and opportunities to rejoin the workforce. Many skilled women in the region currently struggle to make careers and family life work and suffer rising pregnancy and maternity discrimination.
- make the West Midlands a place where everyone can work and raise a family. Tackling these problems in partnership with specialist local returners schemes is key to bridging the skills gap.



#5

We'll make sure wealth is more fairly shared

If someone works hard all day, they deserve a fair day's pay - not to live in poverty. To help, I want the West Midlands to be a living wage region. On day one in office, I will ask every public body to pay the West Midlands (real) living wage, becoming an accredited living wage employer, buying only from real living wage suppliers.

To renew our traditions of ethical employment I will launch a Business Charter for Social Responsibility - including commitments to the living wage, apprenticeships, and both the mental and physical health of staff.

I will not support the use of downstream access providers in the postal sector.

I will support the expansion of Credit Unions, which provide vital consumer credit and finance for small businesses, including social enterprises, using the personal, supportive and advisory approach that banks once provided.

I will also help these parents by developing and implementing a Fuel Poverty Action Plan with utility providers - using smart technology to reduce energy bills, following the best practice of leading exemplars in the region.

WMCA and other public sector workers in the West Midlands will be offered the option to automate a monthly payment from their salaries into a credit union, which will assist credit unions to achieve the scale that they need to help more people in the West Midlands.

We will seek to run a micro-pilot on the use of a Universal Basic Income (UBI) which could have many benefits including helping the long-term unemployed get back into work via part-time work and entrepreneurship.

Finally, we have to make sure that we're a region where every young person learns the right habits of a life time - to build our region's strength for

the years to come. And that's why we must be a region that abolishes youth unemployment. So, we will ask to bring together back-to-work (DWP) funding with all skills funding to have a unified approach to skills for the West Midlands, driven by the West Midlands - making the best use of the role that the voluntary sector can play in getting people back to work.

#5 WE'LL MAKE SURE WEALTH IS MORE FAIRLY SHARED



#6

We'll deliver communities built of homes for all – in a green and pleasant land

Everyone should have the right to their own front door. Under the Tories, home ownership is falling, rents are rising and homelessness is a shame on us all which gets worse every week.

We will seek to end the Tory scandal of homelessness. We will adopt the 'no second night out' principle. New rough sleepers should be identified and helped off the streets immediately so that they do not fall into a dangerous rough sleeping lifestyle. We will work jointly across the West Midlands to deliver 'no second night out' through co-ordinated use and protection of Supporting People budgets.

Strong communities are built on safe homes. And right now we don't have enough homes - or enough affordable homes.

1. I will create a Mayor's Office of Housing and Development to oversee the development of a statutory Regional Spatial Plan which gives structure

and direction to the house building programme that the West Midlands needs – as well as making clear what land is available for business development. This plan will support equal access to arts and culture, sports and leisure, public transport and public spaces. It will aim for everyone to live within 30 minutes by public transport from an outstanding arts/cultural institution, excellent sports/leisure facility, and an inclusive green space.

2. We will undertake a full housing needs assessment across the region.

3. I will agree a proper definition of "affordable housing" so that it meets the housing needs of people on low incomes for the WMCA to use as benchmark for planning authorities. Today, many people - in particular, the young - are unable to get onto the housing ladder and are trapped in relatively expensive rented housing. Others will prefer to rent but should not be subject to excessive rents. We'll double the number of affordable new homes to over

3000 per year – with 'affordable' meaning genuinely affordable.

4. The plan will deliver increased supply of land for housing and to make rapid use of the £200m brownfield reclamation fund across the region, which is essential to release sites where abnormal development costs are preventing development. I welcome the recognition within the WMCA Land Commission report of the importance of brownfield land to the delivery of our housing and employment land and the specific challenges of bringing such sites forward. This is of profound importance to the Black Country, where too much land is blighted by the legacy of its industrial prowess. So I will strive to increase the fund for brownfield site development to £500 million- through a mix of public and private sector funding.

5. We will speed up the planning process reducing costs for business.

6. We will build new, green council homes. I will encourage all constituent and non-constituent councils to embark upon a programme of building new, green council houses. The region is in desperate need of new, affordable, green social housing. Not only will we work with local councils in this way, we will put WMCA housing funding into new, green council housing – because, while the West Midlands needs new housing of all types and tenures, there is a particularly urgent need for more council housing.

7. These will include some use of new techniques such as modular housing to raise the rate of house building, while also recognising the value of conventional construction to the wider economy.

8. We will use planning and other powers to ensure that new homes are developed for local people and prevent new homes being sold overseas and left empty, as has happened in London.

9. Many of our new homes will be built and managed according to co-operative principles. The planning system can support Community Land Trusts, community-led housing projects and mutual retirement homes. We will explore a West Midlands Regional Investment Bank (Cooperative) to help accelerate development, and tackling private developer 'Land Banks'.

10. We will clean up the private-rented sector by pushing for longer tenancies and licensing of landlords. Too many responsible landlords are undercut in the market by those who fail to

look after their properties. Being a responsible landlord means doing things like maintaining properties to basic health and safety standards and providing a written contract. It shouldn't be too much for tenants to ask – and it won't be when I am Mayor.

The West Midlands might have a smokestack image to some, but in fact we're the centre of England's green and pleasant land. And we need to keep it that way if we want to be an even better place to live in the years to come. Everybody in the West Midlands has the right to clean air, welcoming green spaces, and a thriving, local high street in the place that they want to live.

I will establish a Citizens Council on Air Pollution. More people die in the West Midlands due to air pollution than elsewhere in the country: 5.8 per cent of the total number of adult deaths in the area were down to air quality, whereas the equivalent figure across the whole of England is 5.3 per cent.

That's roughly 1,100 deaths per year in the West Midlands at least partly attributable to air pollution.

We will place trees at the heart of development, and protecting ancient woodland and ancient trees – as well as local biodiversity in all its many forms. New housing projects should aspire to at least 20 per cent tree canopy cover. Access to green spaces improves wellbeing and more tree coverage will enhance air quality in the West Midlands. I will support the Heart of





#6 WE'LL DELIVER COMMUNITIES BUILT OF HOMES FOR ALL - IN A GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND

England forest, an environmentally important re-forestation project on the southern edge of the conurbation. We must improve and expand the green spaces of the West Midlands – preserving species such as rare black redstart, white clawed crayfish and internationally renowned populations of great crested newts and bats.

I want our region to become the Green Capital of England, a 100% clean energy region by 2050.

In the first 6 months of office, we will publish a Green Strategy which sets out:

- A plan for Green Jobs. We will create green jobs and tackle fuel poverty by updating infrastructure for energy efficiency, including scaled-up workplace retrofitting, paid for by an extension of green bonds.
- A plan for Green Industry. I want to make the West Midlands - long the home of automotive research and manufacturing - an outstanding world centre for electric cars - both in their manufacture and use. And further support green jobs through the West Midlands being the Energy Capital and hosting the Energy Accelerator.
- Promote electric buses – as well as other forms of clean energy for transport and energy, building upon the pioneering work of Birmingham as the Energy Capital
- Green Energy. We should make public buildings available for community-led solar co-operative enterprises, instead of buying our energy

from companies based outside the West Midlands with limited commitments to carbon reduction. This would make it easier for us to retain wealth in the West Midlands by buying our energy from carbon neutral businesses based in the West Midlands. Work with large employers and home owners to extend solar panel coverage across the region. We will spread solar panels to social housing, helping tackle fuel poverty

- Sign up to the asks of the Healthy Air Campaign
- Channel regional pension fund money out of fossil fuel investments
- Create A West Midlands standard for homes that cost little to heat and power

#7

We'll defend our NHS, prioritising mental health and championing a healthy region

I want to see an outstanding NHS in the West Midlands – with parity of esteem between mental and physical health, supported by a physical activity strategy for everyone in the region. Yet the Tories are doing their best to destroy it.

This is how we will take control of our NHS in the West Midlands:

- Defend the NHS against Tory cuts – demanding our fair share so that frontline services in the West Midlands are of the highest standard. Seek powers to devolve more NHS strategic planning and commissioning to the regional level.
- On taking office, I will immediately convene a task and finish group – using the outstanding professional expertise we have in the region – to radically redesign our approach to both the health care and social care of our older people. We will seek extra powers from government if needed.
- The Tories have shortchanged the care of our older people. We will have to use our skills strategy to create a bigger care workforce, encourage new entrants to the market through social enterprises and push for universal recognition of the Ethical Care Campaign, which champions our region's caring home-workers.
- Back the NHS by working with local universities to train more nurses and doctors in the West Midlands – and keep them in the region. We'll work with our hospitals to grow the number of local people we train to deliver the NHS of the future.
- Mental health to have parity of esteem with physical health – working with partners to achieve early diagnosis and treatment, more and better support for carers, and steps to tackle stigma. Fully implement the WMCA Mental Health Action Plan, while extending a pro-active approach towards mental health to childhood.
- Work with local authorities to produce a West Midlands strategy for physical activity, giving everyone in the region the confidence, opportunity and motivation to participate in sport and recreation.
- Maintain and grow the world class research base in life sciences of the West Midlands – strengthening partnerships between universities and local business.
- Give people more control over their own health – by supporting the development of apps that provide health information, supporting the development of personalised care budgets, and crucially improving prevention of health problems. We'll bring public services together to promote health initiatives, promoting healthy food availability and tackling bad practices in advertising and promotion of unhealthy food.

- Make the public realm as supportive and inclusive as possible for those with dementia, autism, and all those with conditions that need particular forms of support – and encourage a wider understanding of the care required for these people to live with appropriate dignity and vitality.
- We will raise awareness of the importance of children's oral health, promote new schemes in nurseries and schools and aim to reduce the number of child tooth extractions – which cost our NHS millions every year.
- In line with our ethos of early intervention, we will introduce a new general principle in the West Midlands that no child here who needs mental health support will be turned away or forced to wait long periods to access the support they need.
- We will encourage innovative approaches to GP prescribing across the West Midlands, where GPs are able to offer patients a range of non-traditional support, working with voluntary organisations to deliver more counselling and help to get active.
- Monitor the impact of health and social care devolution in Greater Manchester and move to replicate successes, providing sufficient funding is secured from central government.
- Working with the NHS to tackle health inequalities and improve awareness of LGBT issues and tackling domestic abuse in the LGBT community and the barriers that exist around reporting.



#8

We'll foster unity in our community

Now that we're leaving the EU, we need to make sure that our diverse region pulls together. If we're divided, it's harder to make progress. The truth is, we sink or swim together.

Boosting our extraordinary arts, culture and sports is a great way to come together. And it's great for creating jobs.

We will develop a new plan to champion our region's strong arts, cultural, digital and sports scene. My Creative Industries Commission will plan development of skills, capacities and new technologies. Seven years of catastrophic disinvestment by the Tory London government and for decades by the BBC makes this an urgent task.

And I'll back the WMCA city bids for key cultural and sporting events such as Coventry City of Culture 2021 and Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2026.

Channel 4 must relocate to the West Midlands and I will move mountains to see that it does. As the Culture Secretary has said "it must provide a platform for unheard voices and untold stories across the UK". Britain's most super-diverse region is the only place for that.

I will also back the ambitions of Steven Knight, the *Peaky Blinders* writer, to develop a production studio here.

We will push for new investment in arts and culture and take measures to promote new and diverse leadership in, and equality of access to, arts and cultural organisations. As part of a reformed Barnett formula, the government must devolve our fair share of the budget of the Arts Council England to the regional Mayoral level. There is no coherent argument for West Midlands arts, culture and sport to be run by an unaccountable national Quango.

In the meantime, the Mayor will work with Arts Council England (ACE), local government, and local business to:

- Ensure that local people have access to the highest quality art and culture, whether that be from high quality institutions in our major centres or from exciting community provision in local communities;
- Assist this by developing integrated ticketing for public transport and cultural facilities, as well as more frequent public transport services between cultural facilities and residential areas, and harmonisation of leisure passes across the West Midlands.
- Improve marketing of the region's globally recognised cultural assets, relating tourism, local heritage and local cultural identity to the promotion of the local creative economy. Assist this by helping local businesses acquire the knowledge and skills they need to underpin ambitions to trade internationally and secure inward investment.

- Ensure that all young people across the region have the opportunity to not only consume high quality culture but to develop their own creative and performance skills at schools and through community arts provision
- Support this by encouraging schools and local partners to take part in Cultural Education Partnerships through Arts Connect, an ACE programme. And also through public celebration and support for local young artists.
- Oversee development of a more diverse workforce within the creative and cultural sector, especially in leadership roles - through showcases, awards and on public platforms.
- Set up an advisory body to work with me to ensure that any barriers to inclusivity are removed and the impact of all policies on the disabled are fully and properly considered. All disabled people should have the same choice, control and freedom as any other citizen – whether at home, work or in the community .
- See cultural and creative opportunities as part of West Midlands wide strategies to ensure that no places, communities or individuals are left behind – including integrating the role of arts and culture into strategies for improving mental health.
- Build on the work of Creative Black Country who are developing audiences, building activity from grass roots up, and nurturing local ambassadors for culture.
- Improve the planning and licensing system, and work with venues to promote 'agent-of-change' rules.

- Require later-running public transport to help people get home safely after concerts, shows, sporting events and gigs.

Much of the region's identity as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution and a continuing centre for innovation and creativity is embodied in its museum collections, including the internationally significant collection of the city of Birmingham, one of three great regional collections of the UK. Investment in new displays and collections infrastructure such as publicly accessible storage would support museums in forming partnerships with other cultural institutions and attracting young and diverse audiences.

Given this, we will encourage Government to consider relocating agencies and cultural institutions to places where they will complement and strengthen existing provision. The West Midlands is fortunate in having the best cultural provision in the UK outside London, but even larger organisations welcome support in replacing declining local government funding.

We will take further steps to attract new funding and investment into the culture sector, including support for:

- Coventry's ambitions for Draper Hall
- Relocation from London to Birmingham of Dance UK Consortium, an internationally important centre for dance.
- Support and encourage STEAMHouse, a project aimed at fuelling Birmingham's creative industries with new maker and production spaces.

As the centre of England, and the home to Shakespeare, we've got a special role in championing the great English language - our shared language is the most important glue that sticks us together. So, we will encourage a revival of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision. Migrants bring a wealth of skills, knowledge and talent and make a substantial and positive contribution to the economic, social and cultural life of the region.

Like arts and culture, sport has a vital role to play in building active citizens, robust communities, and healthier people.

I will campaign for Birmingham to host the Commonwealth Games in 2026 – which is expected to bring 700,000 visitors to the region, creating 16,000 jobs. This project would accelerate delivery of transport infrastructure and build civic pride.

I will also bring more elite sport to the West Midlands by:

- Advocating to the FA, DCMS and Aston Villa to have international friendlies and FA Cup semi-finals in the West Midlands at Villa Park.
- Seeking to bring more centres of national sporting excellence to the West Midlands – building upon the success of the British Judo Centre of Excellence, based at the Walsall campus of the University of Wolverhampton.

I want the West Midlands to be the nation's leading sports region - from high quality elite

and performance centres to good quality and accessible facilities, open spaces and opportunities to be active in every locality.

I will partner with our elite sports clubs in pursuit of this goal – the poor condition of many grassroots pitches and facilities is barrier to us developing more local stars in football, rugby, cricket and other sports. It is essential that from the Commonwealth Games to Premier League football, all our elite sports clubs and events do their bit to get everyone participating in sport.

West Bromwich Albion's legendary Three Degrees – Laurie Cunningham, Brendon Batson and Cyrille Regis – are part of the West Midlands' heritage of sport breaking down barriers. We should be inspired by this history to ensure that no groups – whether male or female, black or white, gay or straight, disabled or not - are left behind when it comes to physical activity.

We will celebrate and encourage this mass participation in physical activity by having a focused week across the West Midlands each year when communities and residents across the region will be invited to work collaboratively with local community groups and the combined authority to host road closures, events in adjoining parks, common civic spaces, and town centres.

We will work to try to ensure that as many of the barriers that prevent the full use of community assets (including school facilities) are removed or mitigated as much as possible. Community assets

should be focused to ensure that there are places and opportunities to be active in the heart of the communities that are the most disadvantaged and inactive.

We will redesign our urban spaces to be civic active spaces as much as we possibly can and we will use our common civic spaces to encourage physical activity in our citizens as part of a deliberate provocation to healthy behaviour change.

In co-designing the WMCA version of the Work and Health Programme, we will work with DWP to promote physical activity and active travel choices, as some of the prominent ways of getting people back into work and expanding the workforce.



#9

We'll be tough on everyday crime and drugs

#9 WE'LL BE TOUGH ON EVERYDAY CRIME AND DRUGS - AND THEIR CAUSES

The Tories in London cut funding for police in the West Midlands five times more than for leafy Tory shires like Surrey.

Conservative politicians in London don't understand what our life is like in the West Midlands. For crime is on the rise again and is becoming a real problem again.

Teenagers selling drugs at the end of once-respectable streets. Twelve year olds smoking drugs on the buses. Robbery, burglary and violence. It's not like this in the leafy shires where the London Tories live. So why should we put up with that here?

We have the right to feel safe where we live - and for our kids and elderly relatives, not just to feel safe, but to be safe. As Mayor, I'll work with David Jamieson, the Police and Crime Commissioner, to defend our policing from the worst effects of Tory cuts to our policing budgets.

Too many people see the impacts of drug and gang-related crime in their daily lives.

The creation of a Drugs and Gangs Taskforce, with a start-up fund of £1million, will be used to distract young people from being drawn into crime.

And we need to look at the introduction and use of Banning Orders to keep persistent offenders off our public transport system.

Community-led reform of criminal justice

The criminal justice system is struggling to cope with rising demand and increasingly squeezed budgets. Top-down reform is failing. We will advocate to government measures that put communities in the driving seat of our criminal justice system, such as:

- Fully devolving youth justice services, including youth custody, to the West Midlands under the Mayor and Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
- Greater local oversight over the performance of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) with local prosecutors having to work up joint prosecution priorities with the Mayor and PCC;

- Devolving responsibility for cautions and other out of court disposals to the Mayor and PCC;
- Fully devolving the adult prison budget for short sentenced prisoners and women prisoners to the Mayor and PCC;
- Over time, devolving probation services to the Mayor and PCC
- Working with the PCC to subsume the responsibilities of PCC into the office of the Mayor when it is in the best interests of the people of the West Midlands to do so.

Working with the Labour Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) we will continue to build confidence among victims and witnesses to report any experience of violence or abuse by helping to promote accessible services in the community that meet their needs. We will work with the public sector and voluntary organisations to continue to develop effective support services for victims of sexual and domestic abuse.

We will make sure that wherever you are a victim of domestic or sexual violence in the region you receive access to safe specialist support. We will build on the work of the PCC's Victims Commission to ensure that victims in the West Midlands get the help they need.

#10

We'll build a new democracy

Finally, we need to show the world how a new democracy can work.

No-one wants another remote bureaucrat. Once, towns and cities in our region were called the 'best governed in the world'. That's how we need to do it once again. Low cost. High value. Open and accessible, not out of touch.

A more democratic and inclusive WMCA will require:

- A new constitution which is fit for purpose, including much wider representation on the WMCA board, including three non-voting trade union seats and formal representation for the voluntary sector, young people, disabled people and wider civil society, as well as the business and local government representation which already exists.
- Developing a system to allow maximum public scrutiny of WMCA decisions – creating an open data portal for WMCA data, and the data of other public bodies in the West Midlands, to obviate the need for Freedom of Information requests. All stakeholders – including trade unions - will have access to relevant information in sufficient time to properly input into WMCA decision-making. And we will work to ensure that the voice of all disabled people is given equal consideration and that their ability to input to the decision making process is never met with barriers.
- A citizen-centric and smart West Midlands. We'll learn from places like Bristol, to create open data portals which support the creation of apps and services that respond to needs identified in West Midlands.
- A gender-balanced Young West Midlands group, representative of all the Boroughs of the West Midlands and reflecting its full diversity, to meet at least twice a year with the Mayor.
- All committees, panels and boards that advise the Mayor will be gender-balanced – such as the business advisory board. Invitations to appear on all-male panels will be refused.

I'll hold a regular public Mayor's Question Time in every borough and explore new technology to develop models of participation and deliberative democracy.

- Citizens Councils help public bodies to make decisions. They consist of up to 50 randomly selected citizens – chosen through a rigorous and transparent new method called a Citizens Ballot – who meet numerous times over 2-3 months to advise public bodies on a specific policy dilemma.

#10 WE'LL BUILD A NEW DEMOCRACY



