



Department for Levelling Up,
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Dear Mark

Thank you for your letter of 8 December to Rt Hon Michael Gove MP about the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper. I am replying as this matter falls within my ministerial responsibilities. Please accept my apology for the delay in response. I am aware that, since writing, you have met with the Business Secretary. I understand that this was a positive meeting and they responded to the key sentiments reflected in your letter but allow me the opportunity to do so in writing also.

I recognise that the review of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) is causing uncertainty among many LEPs, particularly given the current economic climate. I also appreciate LEPs' desire for clarity on future funding beyond the core funding we have confirmed for the remainder of this financial year. These considerations have been noted, and we are working to address them. We will be saying more on the future of LEPs in the forthcoming Levelling Up White Paper, which we will publish shortly, and thereafter. The LEP Network will have a key role in helping government to deliver its future vision for LEPs, and I look forward to our ongoing collaboration.

You raise the issue of low morale among LEP staff and uncertainty over whether government values the voice of local businesses. It is routine for government not to comment on alleged leaks, but I can assure you that we highly value the role LEPs have played over the past decade in supporting the growth of their places' economies. LEPs have helped to support local businesses and other partners throughout the pandemic, for which we owe LEP board members, staff and stakeholders a debt of gratitude. We very much want LEPs, and the local business voice they provide a platform for, to remain a key partner in our ambition to drive economic growth across the country.

Thank you once again for taking the time to write.

NEIL O'BRIEN MP