



**Leicestershire
Business Voice**

Executive Summary: REALISING OUR FULL POTENTIAL

**Business Leaders' Perspectives on the Future of Leicester,
Leicestershire and Rutland**

Findings from the Leicestershire Business Voice Business Leaders Supper and
Ambassador Programme Launch
16 April 2026

Convened by Leicestershire Business Voice (lbv.co.uk)
The independent voice of business for Leicester and Leicestershire

Purpose and context

Leicestershire Business Voice (LBV) marked a significant milestone on 16 April 2026 with the launch of its Ambassador Programme, bringing together influential business leaders, university representatives, economic development partners and regional stakeholders from across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. The event celebrated the region's considerable strengths and convened key leaders to explore how greater collaboration can accelerate economic growth, investment and opportunity across the area.

Hosted and sponsored by LBV's first Ambassador, Dr Nik Kotecha OBE DL, the inaugural event provided a forum for open and constructive discussion under Chatham House Rules. Leaders shared perspectives on the opportunities and challenges facing the region, identified priorities for collective action, and considered how stronger partnerships can help translate strategic ambition into tangible outcomes that deliver lasting benefits for businesses, communities and the wider regional economy.

This executive summary reflects the discussion as it stood on 16 April 2026, before the Government announced its decision on Local Government Reorganisation. The decision changes the strategic context but does not diminish the relevance of the findings.

The central message

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland are home to world-class businesses, leading universities and significant innovation assets, providing the foundations for long-term economic success. However, while the region consistently demonstrates enterprise, talent and ambition, these strengths are not yet translating into the level of investment, influence and national profile achieved by many comparable areas across the UK.

Business leaders recognised that the absence of devolved funding and decision-making arrangements continues to place the region at a competitive disadvantage. Equally, there was a strong consensus that greater alignment, stronger regional advocacy and a sharper focus on shared priorities are within the region's own control. By working collaboratively and presenting a clear, compelling proposition, Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland can strengthen its ability to attract investment, secure greater recognition and deliver sustainable economic growth.

***"We're getting
'none' at the minute,
and doing nothing
isn't an option."***
Business Leader participant

The graphs below highlight the scale of the funding gap between Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and other devolved regions across the UK.

The devolution investment gap

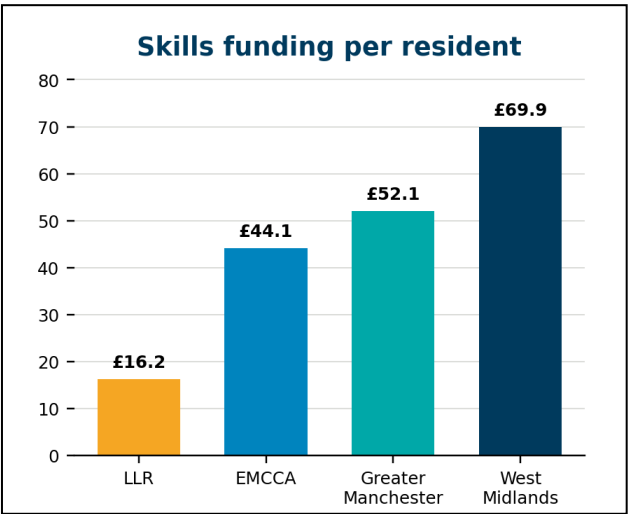


Fig 1: comparative public investment per resident on skills

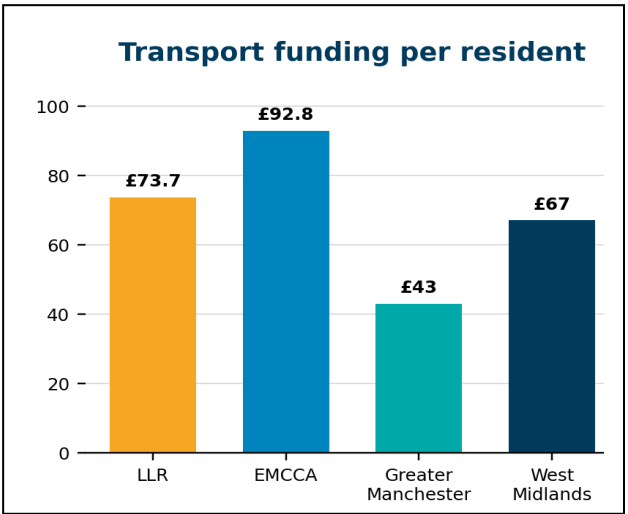


Fig 2: comparative public investment per resident on transport. Data presented at event

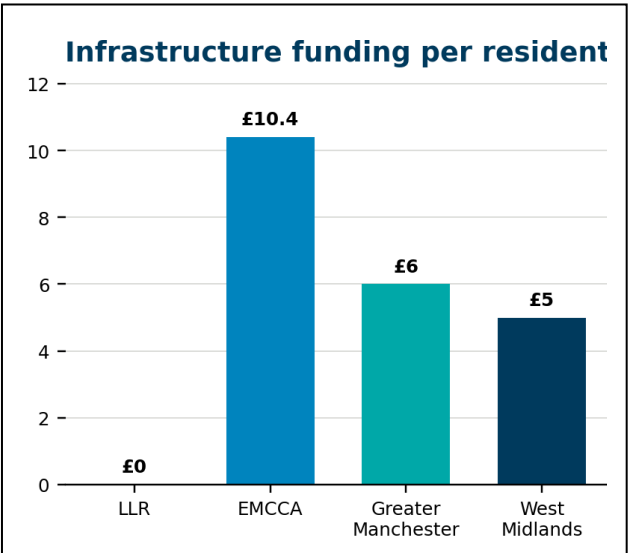


Fig 3: comparative public investment per resident on infrastructure.

Comparative data in figure 1, 2 and 3 on public investment per resident presented at the event, shown here using the precise £ per head figures. courtesy of East Midlands Chamber of Commerce.

What LLR business leaders told us

Many organisations contribute to economic development, but inconsistent messages and duplicated activity make it harder for government and investors to identify shared priorities and assets – **need to reduce fragmentation to strengthen influence and investment.**

"If we don't articulate our strengths ourselves, we've got no chance of convincing anyone else."

Business Leader participant

Our regional strengths in life sciences, space, advanced manufacturing, logistics, professional services and higher education are not presented as one compelling proposition - **The region needs to project a clearer joined up identity.**

The region needs credible champions, stronger engagement with MPs and government, and greater participation from major employers and anchor institutions - **Leadership and representation need to be more vocal and visible.**

LBV and business leaders would welcome the opportunity to contribute business evidence to relevant local authorities developing locally led framework/growth plans connecting innovation, skills, infrastructure, housing, regeneration, inclusion and net zero - **Participants supported a refreshed growth plan informed by business.**

A long list of asks will dilute influence. Three evidence-based, fundable asks should be supported across business, civic and academic leadership - **Government asks must be few and specific.**

The region needs projects with sponsors, business cases, sites, delivery capacity and measurable outcomes, ready when opportunities arise - **Investment readiness matters.**

Employers need clearer routes into education and innovation support, while young people and businesses need better visibility of local opportunities - **Skills and innovation require stronger connections.**

Businesses will contribute when the purpose is clear, their time is respected and progress is reported - **Engagement must produce outcomes.**

Three priority actions

The following three actions were prioritised by the business leaders on the night:

1

Support a locally-led refresh of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Economic Growth Plan

Offer business evidence and convening support for any refresh led through local authority arrangements, alongside universities and economic partners.

2

Agree three clear Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland-wide asks of Government

Focus the region's influence on a small number of evidence-based, fundable priorities with visible support across sectors.

3

Broker a stronger collective business voice across the region

Create a practical mechanism for business organisations and leaders to align intelligence, messaging and advocacy.

What needs to happen next

Refreshed locally led economic growth plan urgently needed, drawing on existing evidence and structured input from business, universities and other economic partners. Business community supports consideration of:

- Widening engagement, convening focused discussions and promoting regional success.
- Testing and agreeing three regional asks, likely to focus on skills, infrastructure and transport, and innovation and business growth.
- Convening business representative organisations around a practical mechanism for shared intelligence and coordinated advocacy.
- Building a prioritised pipeline of investment-ready projects and identify actions that do not require structural change.
- Developing a common regional narrative and a sustained programme of government engagement rather than one-off interventions.
- Introducing a small scorecard and report regularly on commitments, investment, project progress and business participation.

A tangible outcome already underway

The evening has already influenced practical activity. Work to build the wider case for devolution and fairer investment is under way, for example, LBV directors and ambassadors invited to engage with local government, East Midlands Chamber has begun engagement with local MPs, including meetings led by CEO Scott Knowles. Partners are therefore already building understanding, aligning messages and strengthening the region's case.

The role of Leicestershire Business Voice

LBV is a voluntary, independent, apolitical and business-led organisation. Its distinctive contribution is as a convenor: to connect, champion, influence, collaborate and inform. It will not claim ownership of work that requires statutory leadership, including the economic growth plan. LBV growing membership will extend reach, strengthen the evidence it gathers and increase the credibility of the business voice it brings to decision-makers:

- Broker the stronger collective business voice requested by participants.
- Gather and communicate current business intelligence through members and Ambassadors.
- Champion regional assets and successful businesses.
- Support the development of shared evidence and messages.
- Maintain momentum and provide transparent updates on progress.

What success looks like

- ❖ A shared growth plan in active use, with an investable project pipeline.
- ❖ Three agreed asks supported consistently by business, MPs, universities and local government.
- ❖ A credible collective business voice that can respond quickly to opportunities.
- ❖ Stronger national recognition of regional strengths and a more confident external identity.
- ❖ Improved investment in skills, infrastructure and innovation.
- ❖ Visible evidence that collaboration has led to practical results.

“Until you have a unified voice, nobody is going to listen.”

Business Leader participant

The challenge now is to convert discussion into action.

LBV is ready to play its part, working with businesses, universities, local authorities, representative organisations, MPs, government departments and wider regional partners.