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FOR WHAT COMES NEXT

BUILDING
THE FUTURE
WE NEED

WEST MIDLANDS DIGITAL DIALOGUE AND REGIONAL REPORT 2020

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TECHUK DIGITAL DIALOGUES

Throughout the past year, techUK held a series of Digital Dialogues with leaders across the United Kingdom's nations and regions to better understand how we can harness digital innovation to build a better future in the wake of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Working together with stakeholders and members these conversations were intended to help understand what actions could be taken at the local level in the short, medium, and long-term to support a levelled-up recovery and build the future we need.

Ambition in the face of adversity

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to present huge challenges for the UK's nations and regions.

As we plot a course to recovery, we have an opportunity to apply technology with purpose to deliver better outcomes for people, society, the economy, and the planet.

Our mission should not be simply to get back to where we were, but to the build the future we need.

A future that empowers people, strengthens society, grows the economy, and restores the planet.

> "
>
> I AM VERY SURE THAT DIGITAL IS RIGHT AT THE HEART OF HOW WE IN THE WEST MIDLANDS ARE GOING TO BOUNCE BACK. I THINK OF THE INDUSTRIES THAT ARE GOING TO BE STRONG, WHETHER IT BE LIFE SCIENCES, WHETHER IT BE CREATIVE, EVERYTHING IS DEPENDENT UPON DIGITAL. SO IT IS BOTH THE STRUCTURAL ENABLER AND OF COURSE THE APPLIED SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE FUTURE.

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands

Executive summary

The West Midlands Digital Dialogue brought together local leaders from across the public and private sectors on 30 June 2020 to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the West Midlands and how digital technology can support a levelled-up recovery.

The discussion revealed serious concerns about the social and economic impact of COVID-19 and the long-term ambition to level up the whole of the UK.

However, these concerns were matched with optimism about the opportunity to accelerate digital transformation and apply digital technology to address both long-standing issues and new challenges brought about by COVID-19.

There is a strong desire for greater collaboration across public and private sectors to drive digital innovation and help the region recover from the impact of COVID-19.

This report sits alongside six other national and regional reports, as well as a UK-wide report, and sets out some recommendations, based on the Digital Dialogue, about how this could be achieved in the West Midlands, focusing on the following areas:

> Strengthening local digital capital

> Seizing local growth opportunities

> Innovating to tackle urgent problems

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WEST MIDLANDS DIGITAL DIALOGUE

Participants

The key senior stakeholders who participated in the digital dialogue came from a variety of organisations, from the tech sector and beyond. These ranged from large corporates to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); professional services and legal firms; trade organisations, cluster groups, and incubators; the public sector and government; and universities and other educational institutions.

The impact of COVID-19 on the West Midlands

It has been **estimated that the West Midlands will feel a significant impact of COVID-19**, with the regional economy forecast to shrink by more than 10%, due to its reliance on the automotive sector at around 6% of the regional economy which has been particularly hard hit by the pandemic's economic fallout.

28% of **West Midlands trading businesses reported their turnover decreased by more than 50%** (compared to 25% of businesses in the UK); 3.5% of West Midlands businesses have not permanently stopped trading, but have no cash reserves (1.2% across the UK).

In response to the economic crisis, the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) has **released a blueprint to kickstart the region's economy,** making a case to government for the key actions needed to stimulate the region's economy in the short-term and create a long-term, sustainable, green, and inclusive recovery.

Recharge the
West Midlands

Kickstarting the West Midlands Economy:
Our investment case to government

June 2020
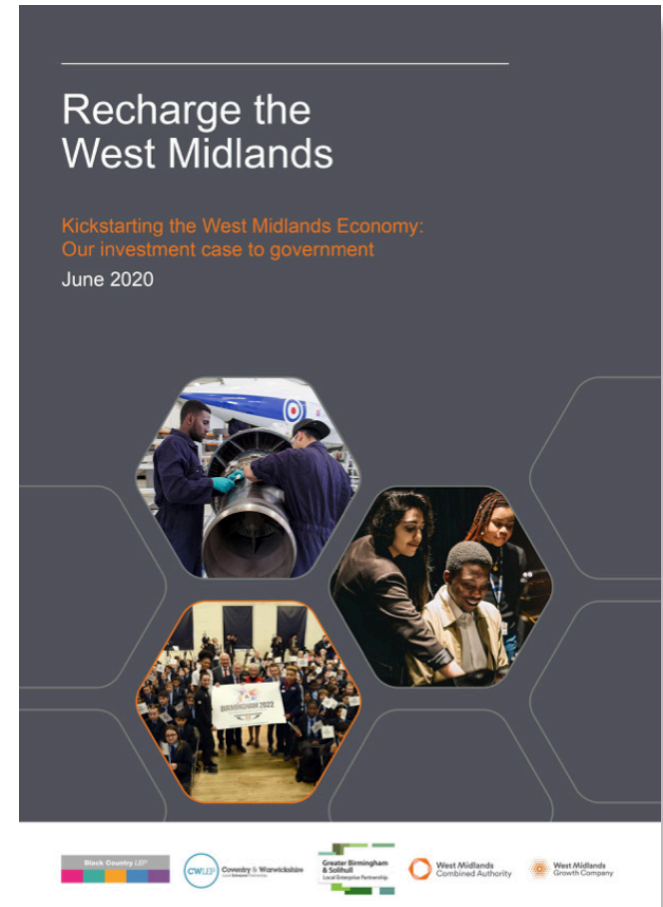
Concerns from the Digital Dialogue

Missing the opportunity for change: concerns that the opportunity to change things for the better will be missed as people focus on getting back to where we were, rather than pushing to where we need to be. Other concerns centred around the need to support new digital businesses, raise the awareness of the benefits of digital tech, and the need to change cultural perceptions of tech as a force for good.

Safety and security: both the need to protect people from COVID-19, and also the need to ensure cyber security at a time when households, businesses, and organisations are ever more dependent on digital.

Digital skills gaps: concern about a lack of sufficient digital skills in the workforce and the need for appropriate training, and the risk of leaving people behind in the "new normal".

A worsening digital divide: concern that COVID-19 will exacerbate the digital divide, leaving behind those individuals without digital skills and connectivity, as well as firms that have yet to adopt digital technology.

> "
> CYBER RESILIENCE IS A BIG ISSUE AND A DIFFICULT SUBJECT, AS MOST COMPANIES DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT. MANY FIRMS HAVE REPORTED CYBER ATTACKS, AND IT IS LIKELY THAT THOSE WHO HAVEN'T PROBABLY HAVE HAD ATTACKS AND DON'T KNOW.
>
> **Digital Dialogue Participant**

COVID-19 as a catalyst for change in the West Midlands

The pandemic has spurred digital adoption. Alongside digital transformation will come tangible benefits, including greater agility and efficiency of firms and improved ability to compete internationally. This was discussed specifically in the context of SMEs, from helping them digitise and utilise the great potential of tech, to helping change company culture by training executives and leaders. In addition, participants discussed the following:

Greater collaboration: collaboration between firms, government, other organisations like tech clusters and universities, and the public was a key point, touching on the need for open data sharing, both local and big data, while ensuring interoperability, ease of access, and privacy.

Regional programmes: ideas for regional programmes, such as a West Midlands, tech-focused think tank; a regional digital cryptocurrency, infrastructure development; and initiatives to support local businesses.

"

I AM CONCERNED THAT WE WILL MISTAKE COVID-19 AS A TEMPORARY SHOCK RATHER THAN A LONGER-TERM CHANGE THAT WAS ACCELERATED. THERE IS A DANGER OF PEOPLE TRYING TO GET BACK TO WHERE THEY WERE BEFORE. THE NEW WORLD NEEDS TO BE EMBRACED, WE NEED TO STEP FORWARD AND GET DIGITAL EMBRACED ACROSS THE WHOLE ECONOMY.

Digital Dialogue Participant

Recommendations

A wide range of ideas were discussed at the Digital Dialogue which have been synthesized into three broad recommendations for next steps:

Work together to strengthen local digital capital
The region's potential to recover will depend upon the strength of its local digital capital. Local stakeholders from across the public and private sectors should work together to develop an integrated regional plan to strengthen the eight component parts of local digital capital.

Use digital to accelerate local growth opportunities
The West Midlands has several sectors that are primed for success, including advanced manufacturing, Industry 4.0, and unique regional opportunities like HS2, the Commonwealth Games, and Coventry City of Culture. Concerted action should be taken to ensure that these sectors are at the forefront of digital adoption to support and accelerate their growth.

Launch local innovation challenges to tackle urgent problems.
COVID-19 has taken a heavy toll on many businesses, services and communities across the region. The West Midlands Combined Authority should challenge local innovators from across the public and private sector to come forward with new ideas and innovative solutions to some of its most urgent local problems, from housing and healthcare to supporting high streets and the creative economy.
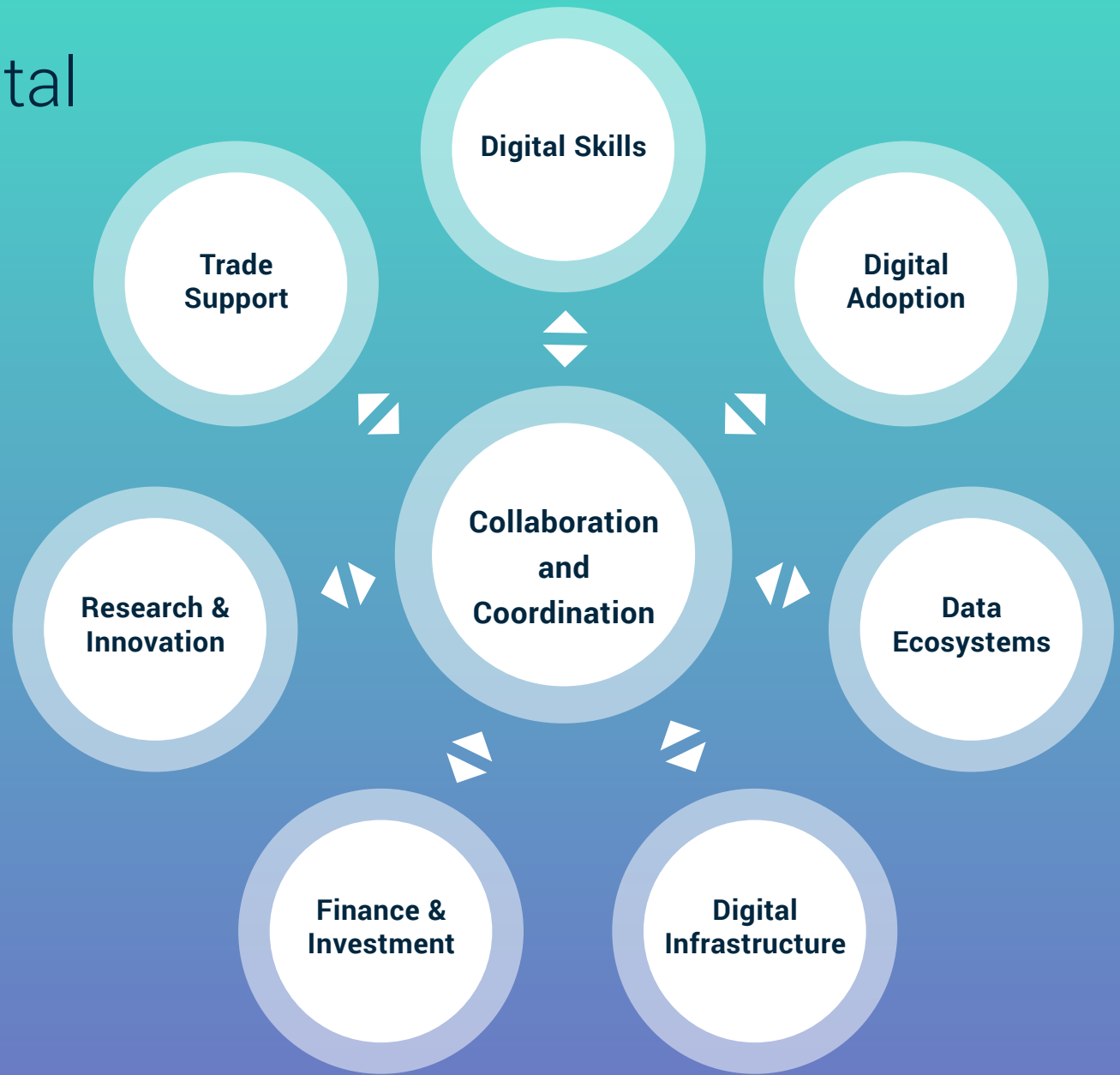
STRENGTHEN LOCAL DIGITAL CAPITAL

Local Digital Capital

Local digital capital describes the inputs needed at the local level to maximise the benefits of digital.

These eight components were identified by participants across techUK's Digital Dialogue events as the essential inputs necessary for a nation or region to benefit from digital innovation.

techUK believes there is real value in thinking about these inputs in aggregate and developing a strategy that focuses on strengthening digital capital at the national and regional level.

Digital Skills

Trade Support

Digital Adoption

Collaboration and Coordination

Research & Innovation

Data Ecosystems

Finance & Investment

Digital Infrastructure

Strengthen local digital capital

While participants in the Digital Dialogue touched on many of the different aspects of local digital capital, the four that were the most frequently discussed were:

> Digital skills

> Digital adoption

> Finance and investment

> Collaboration and coordination

Participants stressed the need for greater levels of digital skills – better training and skills development programmes, particularly in cyber security and other high-demand skills.

Second, a more comprehensive connectivity infrastructure and broadband coverage was a key point, and participants also talked about the opportunity provided by 5G.

Third, participants discussed the opportunity provided by open and shared data to promote innovation and new business starts and growth.

Finally, participants stressed the need for greater levels of coordination and collaboration between the public and private sectors.

"

WE ARE LUCKY TO HAVE THE COMBINED AUTHORITY AND MAYOR ANDY STREET – THEY DO GOOD WORK ON REGIONAL COORDINATION. IT'S GREAT TO HAVE THIS COORDINATION AND TECH HAS THE POWER TO MAKE THIS POSSIBLE.

Digital Dialogue Participant

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BEFORE COVID-19 WE HAD SEEN INCREASES IN COLLABORATION AND MY WORRY IS THAT WE WILL START TO BACK INTO OUR SILOS AND FOCUS ON OUR OWN CLUSTERS, INSTEAD OF COMING TOGETHER AS A REGION AND BUILDING A NARRATIVE THAT WE CAN ALL BUY INTO.

Digital Dialogue Participant

WE NEED TO BE WILLING TO JOIN THINGS UP ACROSS THE REGION, COORDINATE, AND WORK TOGETHER. THERE IS NO NEED TO DUPLICATE WORK AND WE CAN LEARN FROM EACH OTHER'S SUCCESSES AND FAILURES.

Digital Dialogue Participant

Digital skills

More than **half of the small and medium-sized enterprises in the West Midlands lack the necessary digital skills that could allow them to grow.** A lack of cyber security skills in particular were discussed by the participants in the Digital Dialogue.

In the West Midlands, **18% of people lack the essential digital skills needed for day-to-day life online.** However, 27% have boosted their digital skills during the COVID-19 lockdown period.

In order to address the region's digital skills gap, the **West Midlands Combined Authority has launched a Digital Skills Partnership,** bringing together tech firms, entrepreneurs, local enterprise partnerships, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media, & Sport (DCMS), universities, colleges, and other training providers in order to identify what digital skills are needed and to encourage collaboration.

"

WHAT WE ARE SEEING NOW IS LESS OF A NEED FOR LONG AND ESTABLISHED TRAINING AND RATHER THE NEED FOR FAST-PACED, INTENSE, SHORT TRAINING. WE NEED TO SHOW PEOPLE HOW DIGITAL CAN HELP THEM GET BETTER PAID JOBS, RATHER THAN CAUSING JOB LOSSES.

Digital Dialogue Participant

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BUSINESSES AND CITIZENS ARE SEEING DIGITAL SKILLS AS MUCH MORE IMPORTANT AND RELEVANT. PEOPLE WANT TO IMPROVE THEIR SKILLS AND THERE IS A REAL OPPORTUNITY HERE TO BUILD ON THAT AND DELIVER. THE BIG QUESTION IS HOW WE MAKE THOSE SKILLS AVAILABLE AND ACCESSIBLE IN A MODULAR WAY.

Digital Dialogue Participant

Digital infrastructure

In the **West Midlands in 2018**, 4G data from all operators reached 76.3% of premises, and 79.5% of the geographical area, with voice calls from all operators reaching 93.4% of premises.

The West Midlands is the first large-scale, multi-city **5G test bed** in the UK, with hubs in Birmingham, Coventry, and Wolverhampton.

BT, a partner of the Building the Future We Need campaign, has a number of 5G projects active in the West Midlands.
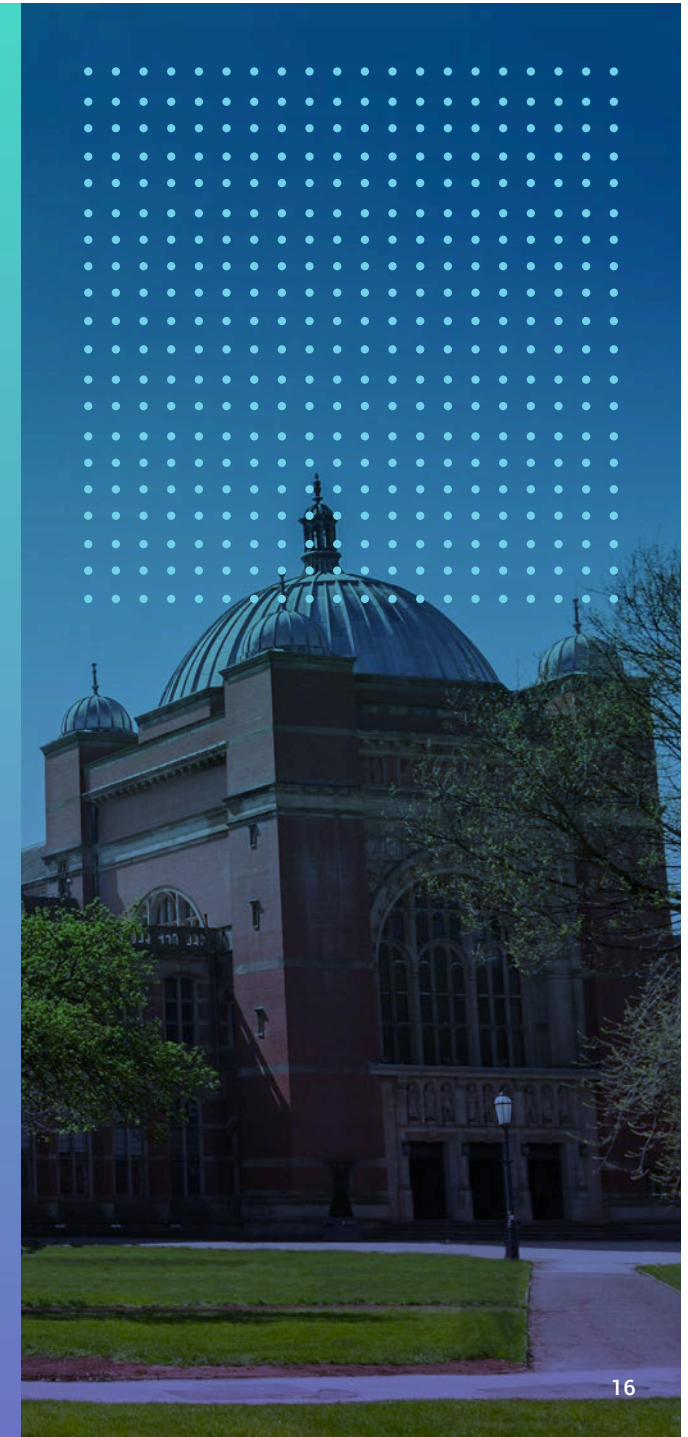
"

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY UNDERPINS EVERYTHING WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT – I AM OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE, BUT WE NEED TO LOOK AT WHAT MAKES SENSE IN DIFFERENT AREAS – 5G IS NOT A UNIVERSAL SOLUTION, IT IS ONE PART OF THE SOLUTION.

Digital Dialogue Participant

GAPS IN COVERAGE THAT WE ALL PREVIOUSLY TOLERATED WILL NO LONGER BE.

Digital Dialogue Participant

Data ecosystems

The West Midlands Combined Authority has a regional **Office for Data Analytics (ODA), as a part of its devolution deal.** The ODA brings together existing investments in research, data, and intelligence to support the WMCA's Strategic Economic Plan and provide an evidence base for future policy changes.

The **West Midlands Open Data Forum** is an organisation that brings together data owners and data users and advocates for the release and use of public data by local government and other publicly-funded services.

"

DATA IS THE HEART OF THE WORLD — AND THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO SHARE THEIR JOURNEY, TO MAKE TECH MORE ABOUT ALGORITHMS AND THE CONSUMER AND SHARE WHAT PEOPLE ARE EXPERIENCING.

Digital Dialogue Participant

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WE SHOULD PUSH FOR MORE OPEN DATA, AND MORE OPEN SOURCE DATA. WE SHOULD CREATE A CENTRAL LOCATION IN THE WEST MIDLANDS TO HOST DATA AND MAKE IT AVAILABLE.

Digital Dialogue Participant

DATA IS REALLY IMPORTANT, BUT IT NEEDS TO BE GOOD QUALITY DATA AND WE NEED TO MAKE SURE IT IS PUBLISHED IN A MEANINGFUL WAY.

Digital Dialogue Participant

Collaboration and coordination

Collaboration also emerged as a key priority in the West Midlands, with participants citing the benefits of a strong devolved administration, while also wanting deeper collaboration within the digital sector and between the digital sector, local government, universities and colleges, and other economic sectors.

SEIZE LOCAL GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

Seize local growth opportunities

The participants in the Digital Dialogue highlighted a few key sectors in the region where digital innovation can be applied to drive economic recovery and growth:

> Advanced manufacturing and utilising digital tech, including digital twins, for new business models like servitisation, with Rolls Royce as an example of this with their "Power by the Hour" service specifically mentioned.

> Industry 4.0 including modular housebuilding, retrofitting real estate, greenhouse farming, and more.

The discussion also touched on some unique regional opportunities to implement digital solutions.

> The Commonwealth Games as a showcase of the progress the region has made.

> Coventry City of Culture – digitise the art and cultural exhibits that are currently archived in order to make them more accessible.

Seize local growth opportunities

In addition to what was discussed in the Digital Dialogue, the West Midlands Combined Authority, in its strategic economic plans, has spotlighted the following six sectors (among others) as key sectors for growth. Many of these are complementary with the key growth areas discussed by the participants, providing further evidence of their importance.
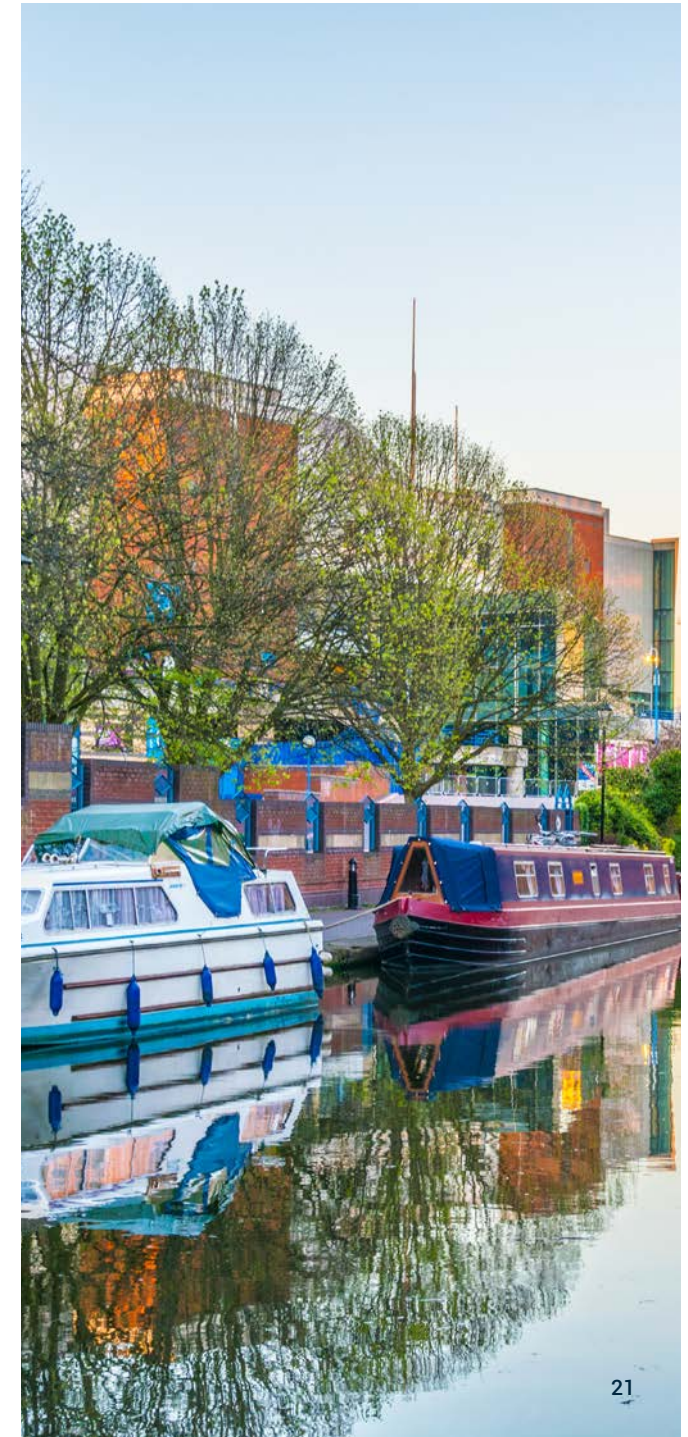
> Advanced manufacturing: green manufacturing

> Life sciences: healthcare innovation

> Digital and creative: infrastructure, 5G, fibre

> Housing and land: brownfield regeneration and construction

> Transport and logistics: HS2

> Regional opportunities: Commonwealth Games, Coventry City of Culture

These key sectors are ripe for innovation and growth driven by digital innovation. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the need to double down on these key growth sectors to help the West Midlands recover and thrive post-COVID-19.

Opportunities for collaboration and coordination should be deepened by building up strong networks, to join up sectoral ecosystems and harness any potential spill over effects from the tech sector to other sectors.

New business starts should also be encouraged in the key growth sectors in the long-term, in order to better utilise the developing talent pool, encourage entrepreneurship, and raise productivity.

These sectors are the key sectors we believe have the best chance of increasing digital uptake and innovation.

Advanced manufacturing

There are strong potential spill over effects from digitising advanced manufacturing, with positive knock-on effects in construction, logistics, and making the most of unique upcoming regional opportunities.

Green manufacturing and green growth in particular were highlighted as a specific opportunity to jump start the economic recovery effort, improve the wellbeing of communities, and make significant strides towards meeting the UK's goal of net zero by 2050.

BT, a partner of techUK's Building the Future We Need campaign, is working with Worcester 5G Testbed and Worcester Bosch to create a productivity-boosting smart factory using autonomous robots, 5G, the Internet of Things (IoT), and edge computing.

Transport and logistics

As COVID-19 and the international trade climate reshape supply chains, there has been a tendency towards re-shoring. Opportunities in advanced manufacturing are greater than ever post-COVID-19.

The West Midlands, as a big exporter, can use digital technology to upgrade and reshape its ports and reshape its supply chains. The government's proposals on freeports offer the chance to catalyse change and deploy new digital tech to drive gains in efficiency, productivity, and safety in the region's ports and supply chains. The use of tech like 5G, IoT, advanced sensors and trackers, and the potential for automated vehicle deployment should all be explored.

"

I'M WORRIED ABOUT RISING POLLUTION AS PEOPLE ABANDON PUBLIC TRANSIT FOR CARS DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

Digital Dialogue Participant

"

WE HAVE A SUPPLY CHAIN TEAM WORKING WITH AUTOMOTIVE COMPANIES, LOOKING AT HOW SENSORS CAN ENABLE US TO TRACK THE PROGRESS OF COMPONENTS DIGITALLY IN REAL TIME. THIS TECH CAN HELP BUILD MORE RESILIENT SUPPLY CHAINS, AND THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO DEPLOY THAT TECH FOR BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE PURPOSES.

Digital Dialogue Participant

Life sciences

The West Midlands has strengths in health innovation, and those should be leveraged to drive the expansion and further investment in research and the ongoing research at the Birmingham Life Sciences Park to rapidly scale new health tech and improve supply chain resilience.

Digital and creative

The West Midlands should double down and further utilise its 5G application accelerator projects and its status as the UK's first large-scale, multi-city 5G test bed to test innovative new uses for the technology. 5G tech is being looked at to underpin many of the other digital-first recovery efforts in the region, from transforming transport and medical innovation, to helping the region meet carbon emissions goals.

Birmingham is one of the largest digital tech clusters outside of London with more than 3,000 firms. Other large clusters include ones in Warwick (1000+ firms), Solihull (900+), Stratford-on-Avon (700), Wolverhampton (600), and Telford (500). The region should leverage this strength and build better collaboration both in between tech firms and between the tech sector and the wider economy in order to spur economic growth and innovation.

The digital sector will play an ever-increasing role as time passes. Prior to the pandemic, the tech sector grew at a rate nearly six times greater than the rest of the economy. The pandemic and lockdown have further demonstrated the importance of digital tech, and its importance will continue to grow in the future.
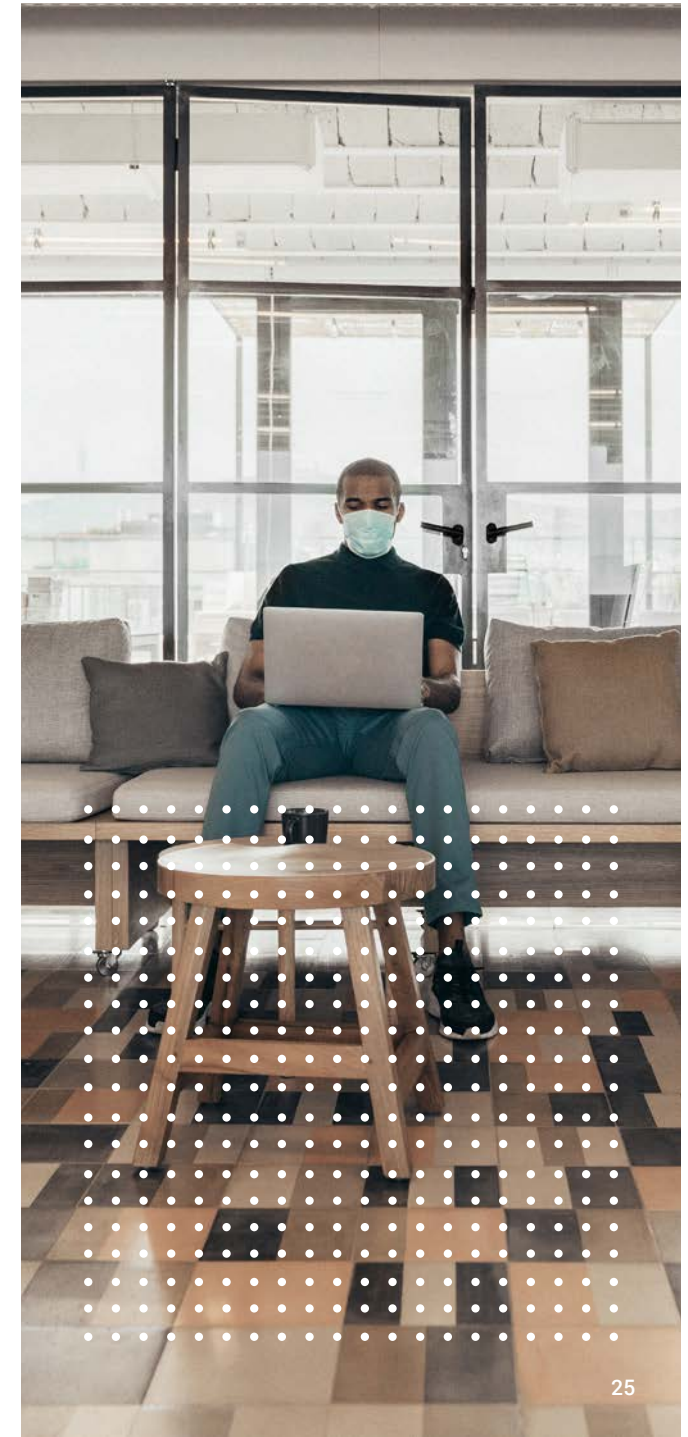
Housing and land

The construction sector is a strength in the West Midlands, and the present opportunity to regenerate and redevelop brownfield sites is an opportunity to leverage the region's strengths in this sector and provide new and affordable homes.

Digital should be a fundamental part of the process, from digital design software to drive design innovation, building information management (BIM) tools, and digital construction to ensure safety and efficiency, to ensuring that new homes and buildings meet low emissions standards. HS2 is another chance to fully integrate digital into the construction process.

"
WE SHOULD FOCUS ON INDUSTRY 4.0 – THERE IS NO BETTER PLACE TO DO THIS IN THE WEST MIDLANDS – ESPECIALLY DOWNSTREAM SOLUTIONS. BIRMINGHAM IS THE CITY OF A THOUSAND TRADES – AND WE CAN DO INDUSTRY 4.0 IN MODULAR HOUSEBUILDING, REFITTING REAL ESTATE, GREENHOUSE FARMING, AND OTHER ADJACENT AREAS.

Digital Dialogue Participant
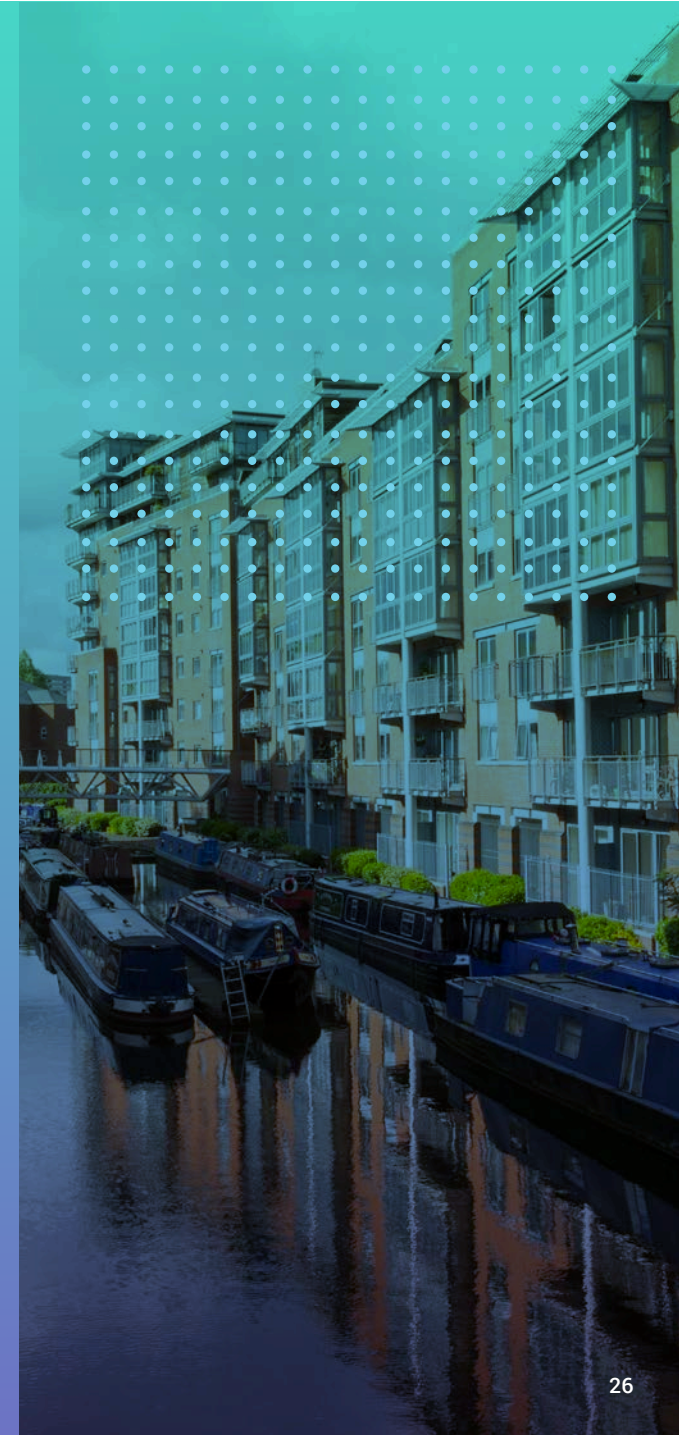
Regional opportunities

The 2022 Commonwealth Games will be taking place in the West Midlands and are a unique opportunity to highlight the region's strengths. The opportunity should be used to utilise digital technologies like data sharing and smart city initiatives to ensure sufficient transit capacity to meet the influx of visitors.

Coventry was selected as the UK's 'City of Culture' in 2021 and is a yearlong opportunity to showcase the city's rich history and subsequent development. Digital will be key to ensuring success, from utilising big data to better plan and understand transport needs, to enabling innovative cultural and artistic events.

" THE WEST MIDLANDS IS VERY DIVERSE, AND WE KNOW THAT DIVERSITY BRINGS GREAT STRENGTHS TO TECH. DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION NEED TO BE MAJOR THREADS THAT RUN THOUGH EVERYTHING.

Digital Dialogue Participant
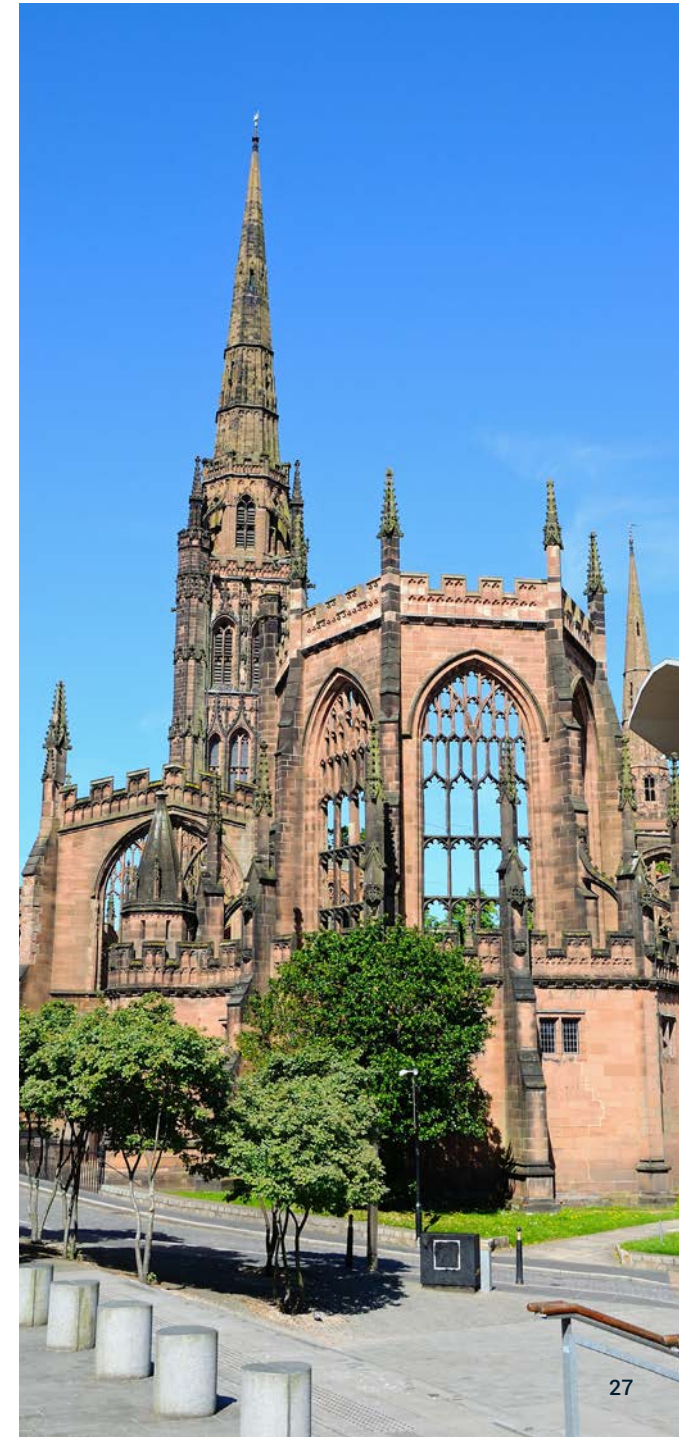
Digitising key growth sectors

Best way to enable the digitisation of the West Midland's key growth sectors is to do two things:

Ensure that the strategic economic planning for key growth sectors has a strong digital underpinning.

Foster greater collaboration, crossover, and links between local tech firms and firms in the key growth sectors, to best utilise digital technology to supercharge growth sectors. This could take the form of events to generate collaboration or the creation or expansion of cross-sectoral groups and organisations.

LAUNCH
LOCAL
INNOVATION
CHALLENGES

Launch local innovation challenges

"

Digital technology is not a panacea to deep-rooted issues but can help support new approaches and solutions.

Regional authorities and local enterprise partnerships should set out "local innovation challenges" in the model of "The Grand Challenges" in order to spur new local innovation, with a commitment to scale successful ideas.

Participants discussed how digital technology can help regenerate high streets and public spaces across the region, using data to help landlords and tenant businesses have a greater understanding of footfall projections and other basic measures. Participants also spoke about digitising arts exhibitions in order to make them more widely accessible.

This is one example of many local innovation challenges where digital solutions should be considered.

WE CAN HELP THE HIGH STREET LEVERAGE DARK ASSETS AND DEMOCRATISE ACCESS TO BIG AND LOCAL DATA. IF WE CAN MAKE BIG DATA INSIGHTS AVAILABLE TO THE LANDLORD AND TENANT BASE, BASIC THINGS LIKE FOOTFALL PROJECTIONS. DIGITAL CAN HELP BRIDGE THE DATA GAP TO BIG COMPANIES, AND WE NEED TO THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT HOW WE CAN MAKE DATA ACCESSIBLE.

Digital Dialogue Participant

IT MIGHT BE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO LOOK AT WEST MIDLANDS BLOCKCHAIN – SOMETHING LIKE THE BRISTOL POUND OR THE HULL COIN, WHICH COULD STIMULATE LOCAL BUSINESSES ESPECIALLY IN CONJUNCTION WITH 5G.

Digital Dialogue Participant

Conclusions

The continuing COVID-19 crisis remains a huge constraint on recovery efforts.

However, every effort should be made to incorporate digital into the region's recovery strategy and future economic planning. There is evidence this is happening, but this will need to be maintained and built upon.

This report sets out some initial thinking on how that could be done, building upon existing strengths and assets.

Further work is required to develop these ideas, and the Digital Dialogue made it clear that collaboration both within the West Midlands and across the UK will be essential for success.

"

WE NEED TO EXPAND THE DEFINITION OF DIGITAL SKILLS – THERE IS NOT ENOUGH FOCUS ON RETRAINING THE UNEMPLOYED, WE NEED A NEW MINDSET FOR DIGITAL SKILLS BECAUSE THESE SKILLS ARE NEEDED ACROSS THE ENTIRE ECONOMY, NOT JUST IN THE DIGITAL SECTOR.

Digital Dialogue Participant

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WE NEED ENOUGH PEOPLE WITH THE RIGHT DIGITAL SKILLS TO MAKE THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION HAPPEN. WE STARTED THIS CRISIS WITH A CHRONIC LACK OF SKILLS, AND THE PROBLEM IS WORSE NOW. NONE OF THIS IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT PEOPLE PIVOTING TO DIGITAL SKILLS AND CAREERS. THE ENTHUSIASM IS THERE FROM INDUSTRY AND INDIVIDUALS – WHAT WE NEED TO DO IS PROVIDE THE PATHWAY IN NOW.

Digital Dialogue Participant

Survey of participants

techUK recently surveyed the participants of the West Midlands Digital Dialogue, asking them how optimistic they were about the potential for digital innovation to drive the economic recovery in the region, and where they felt digital transformation efforts could make the biggest difference.

Of the respondents, 50% were somewhat optimistic, and 50% were very optimistic since taking part in the Digital Dialogue.

Respondents felt that digital technology could make the biggest difference in the following areas:

> Construction, smart cities, and low carbon technology.

> Public service delivery, particularly of health and social care.

> Transportation and future mobility.

> Promoting innovation (5G particularly) and improving efficiency and competitiveness for manufacturers.
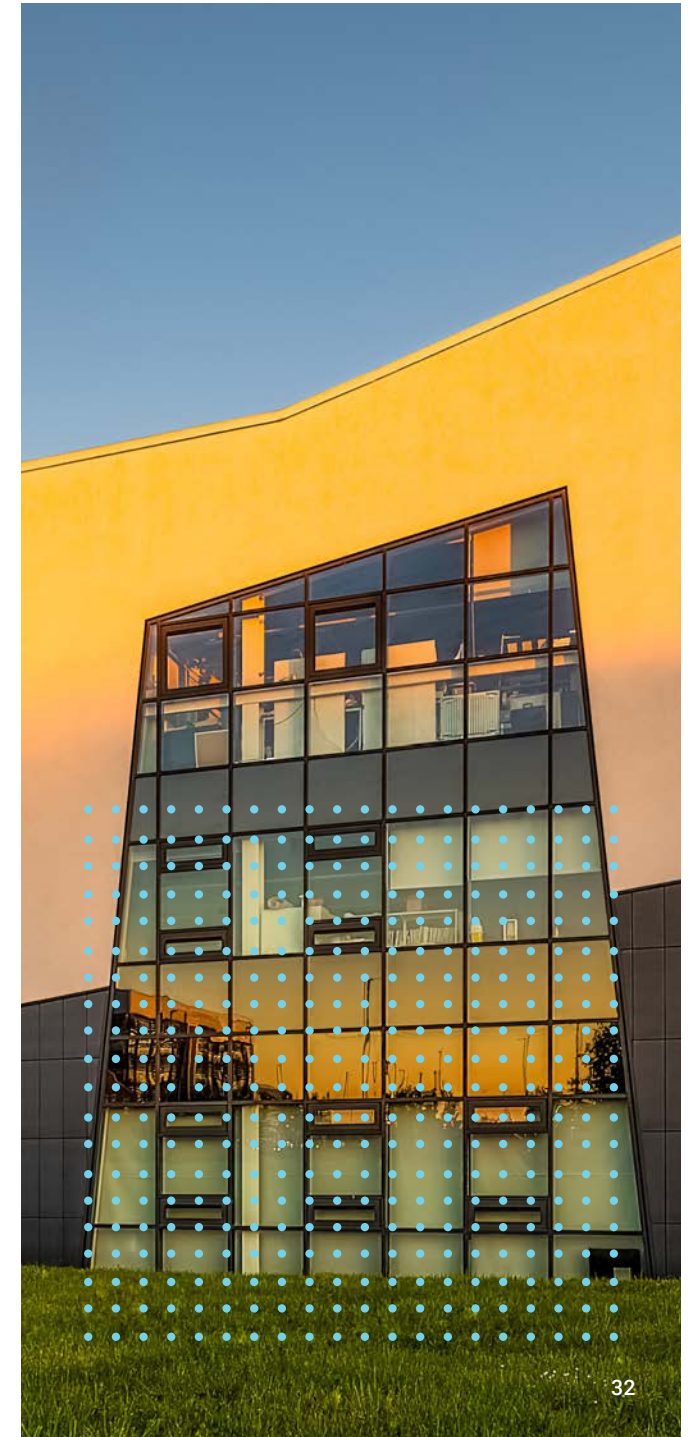
Participants

Tim Arnold, Technology Director, Six Degrees Group

Richard Bovey, Senior Analytics Manager, Jaguar Land Rover

Kum Wah Choy, Chief Engineer, Costain

Dan Coleby, Modern Workplace Product Director, ITLab

Julian David, CEO, techUK

Simon Dean, Consultant Lead/BIM Coordinator, Balfour Beatty

Amanda Dorel, Regional Director, Midlands & South Wales Region,
SME Banking, Lloyds Banking

Roland Emmans, UK Technology Sectors Head | Corporate Banking, HSBC

David Frank, UK Government Affairs Manager, Microsoft

Robert Franks, Managing Director, West Midlands 5G

Michael Gaunt, Consultant, Balfour Beatty

Dr David Hardman MBE, CEO, Innovation Birmingham

Stuart Higgins, Head of Smart Cities and IoT – UK Public Sector, Cisco

Jayne Holt, Assistant Principal, Walsall College

Charlotte Horobin, Membership Director, Make UK

Rachid Hourizi, Chair, Institute of Coding

Amanda James, Midlands Regional Connector, Halifax

Margot James, Executive Chair, Warwick Manufacturing Group

Matt Jones, Chair (COO ParentPay), West Midlands Digital Skills Partnership

Karl Kalcher, CEO, Mindfolio

Ravi Kumar, Digital Lead, Black Country Consortium

Professor John Lathan, Vice Chancellor and CEO, Coventry University

Rob Mallaband, UK Managing Director, Crimson Systems

Yiannis Maos, Founder, Birmingham Tech Week

Chris Meah, CEO, School of Code

Suzie Norton, Founder/Director, Zanna Creative

Lisa Parry, Head of Marketing – UK Software, Civica

Professor Pete Sawyer, Head of Computer Science, Aston University

Phil Smith CBE FREng, Chairman, Be the Business

Andy Street, Mayor, West Midlands Combined Authority

Wendy Sycamore, BT Group Regional Lead, Midlands

Julian Turner, CEO, Westfield Cars

Antony Walker, Deputy CEO, techUK

Jonathan Wareham, Project Manager, Costain

Tracey Westall, Non-Executive Director, WM5G

Jane Whitlock, Senior Partner – Midlands, Deloitte

Jane Wood, UK Nations and Regions Director, BT

Gary Woodman, Chief Executive, Worcestershire LEP

Nicola Wright, Senior Business Manager – Tech & Creative,
West Midlands Growth Company Limited

Dr Wei Wu, CEO, WeiPoint Ltd

"

WE SHOULDN'T BE TOO DOWN ON OURSELVES – WE HAVE MORE THAN 3,000 DIGITAL BUSINESSES IN BIRMINGHAM, MORE THAN 1,700 IN WARWICK, WITH A FAST-GROWING GAMING SECTOR IN LEAMINGTON SPA. COORDINATION, EDUCATION, AND COMMUNICATION ARE HUGELY IMPORTANT BUT WE HAVE A LOT OF POTENTIAL. WE NEED TO WORK TO CHANGE THE IMAGE OF THE WEST MIDLANDS, TO PROMOTE THE GREAT WORK WE'VE GOT AND SHOWCASE THE GOOD THINGS AND TO ENCOURAGE COMPANIES TO TELL THE WORLD WHAT THEY DO AND WHERE THEY ARE FROM.

Digital Dialogue Participant