

BUILDING BACK BETTER

HELPING THE LIVERPOOL CITY
REGION TO BUILD BACK
BETTER

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“*March 23rd seems a long time ago...*”

Back at that time and in the weeks preceding it, businesses of all sizes were thrown headlong into dealing with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The priority then and now was ensuring people's safety (be they stakeholders, employees, customers or clients), but at the same time survival mode kicked in.

Immediate issues were dealt with and intelligence was shared. Most businesses wondered what the impact would be on them, their clients and customers. At the same time, the “homeworking” exercise and the initial challenges were being dealt with, and the word “furlough” was on the tips of tongues.

Nearly 3 months on from lockdown, the world is already a different place. People's health and safety remains the number one priority but with Summertime having officially started, thought has turned to the imminent recession that we are facing together.



From the Liverpool City Region's perspective we are all looking at how our respective businesses can trade through and out of the recession, and do so in a way that also helps to enable the City Region (having made immeasurable strides in the last 10-15 years) to come out of it as vibrant, important and positive as it was immediately prior to the onset of the pandemic.

“There has been a recognition that there can be no return to “business as usual” and nor should there be.”

Earlier in June the Combined Authority (having consulted extensively with national government, the LEP, local businesses and bodies such as Professional Liverpool) announced four priority themes for economic and business recovery in the City Region.

Those of us who have lived and worked in the City for most if not all of our days know that despite the great strides taken (where we have had the fastest economic growth in England at 3.5% a year and above average productivity growth), even prior to the onset of the pandemic we had a number of long-standing and deep-rooted social and economic challenges and inequalities which we were still dealing with (including in health, skills and employment levels).

As a result, the pandemic, and the recession we find ourselves in is going to be even more of a challenge to the City Region than potentially some other areas of the UK.

How we deal with the recession and build back up as a City Region is therefore vital and it is encouraging that the general consensus is that the four themes/pillars of the recovery resonate and strike a chord amongst most businesses in the City Region (be it about the opportunity to build back better in a fairer more inclusive way, an enhanced business eco-system, the fact that the recovery will be people led, or even the proposed focus on place and economic infrastructure that protect our culture and visitor economy).

What the last few weeks and months have shown to me is that there has been a recognition that we are all in the same boat and, both in businesses and individually, everyone has been willing to look to collaborate in a way that is best for all of our businesses individually and for the City Region collectively.

Politics aside there is a recognition that it is not necessarily anybody's fault from a business perspective and this has enabled us to turn very quickly to focusing on how best to get out of the situation and look at the positives (rather than prevaricate unduly about how we got to where we are).



As a society, there is sometimes a tendency to focus on the negatives and look at things from a “glass half empty” perspective. It is vital in the City Region to, instead, focus on the positives to come out of this (of which there are a number). Work life balance has become an even bigger priority with people realising that working from home is not as problematic as many initially thought. The digital infrastructure, despite there being need for additional capability in the City Region, has stood up generally and enabled us to work from home and more flexibly.

“We have all witnessed the benefits of less carbon emissions and a rise in cycling, running and walking.”

In turn this makes you look at some of the fabulous offerings we have in the Liverpool City Region, such as the expertise we have in health and life sciences, together with advanced engineering and green technology.

Those areas are going to be even more important coming out of recession and the City Region is therefore uniquely placed to play a key role. We have an eco-system already in place which should greatly assist and have more knowledge-based businesses than people are aware of.

“Innovation will be a key element of this entrepreneurialism, from both a social and economic perspective.”

It is therefore important to incentivise this and also to ensure that there is adequate funding - both debt and equity (the latter being particularly important) - to enable businesses to come through this and not only thrive but prosper.

To conclude, I am not for a minute saying it is going to be easy or a quick recovery but it is key as a City Region that we continue to work together, and focus on the positives and some of the changes to our working and home environments that have come out in recent months that will stand us in good stead going forward.

It is also important to recognise that we have some incredible infrastructure in the City that can play a key role and we need to make sure that we work to maximise opportunities in those areas and also let people outside of the Liverpool City Region know what we are doing and how important it is. We are an incredibly proud of our heritage and what we have to offer, but despite that we tend to be a little bit ‘backwards in coming forward’ in telling others about it. We should not do that this time.