

WMCA Activity - Sandwell MBC

Anne Shaw, Executive Director
- TfWM

Mayor of the
West Midlands



West Midlands
Combined Authority

Jobs for Everyone

We're investing in jobs, skills, training and apprenticeships. Reducing youth unemployment and ensuring everyone has a job that pays well.

Homes for Everyone

We're building social and affordable homes and creating vibrant communities so that everyone will have a place to call home.

Growth for Everyone

We're helping businesses grow, supporting innovation and creativity, and making sure everyone benefits.

Journeys for Everyone

We're connecting communities and making travel easier, safer and more affordable for everyone.



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Jobs for Everyone

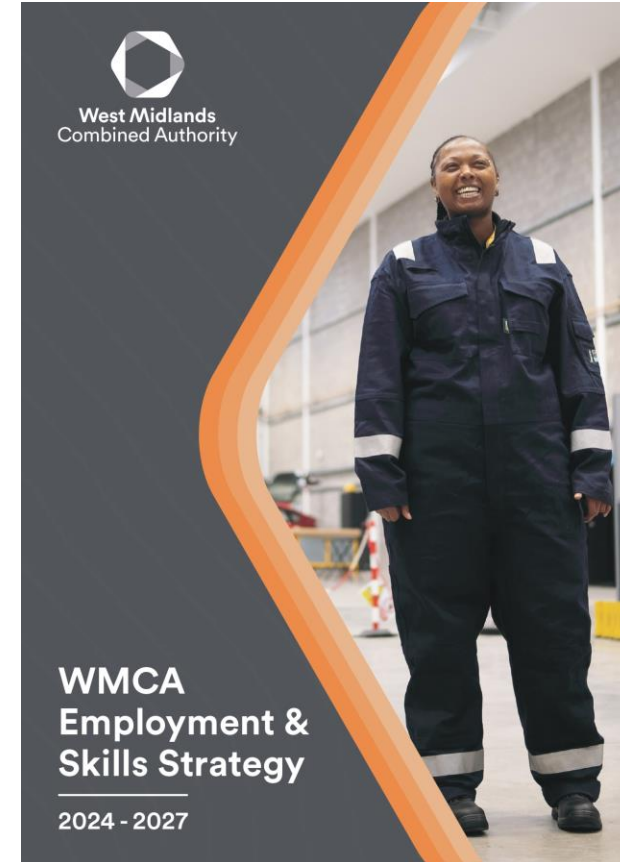
Strategy

This WMCA Employment and Skills Strategy (2024-2027) seeks to build on our success to date, by setting out a vision for an integrated employment and skills system for the region, through which we can stimulate economic growth, deliver better outcomes for residents and businesses, and create healthier thriving communities.

Over the next three years, we will continue our focus on four key pillars:

- building strong and inclusive communities.
- providing a good education up to level 2.
- supporting residents into-employment and supporting career progression.
- meeting future skills needs at level 3 and above through upskilling and reskilling.

Due to the teams within this space working mainly on an Academic Year basis, the information provided in the following slides covers the 1 September 23 to 31 August 24 period.



Jobs for Everyone

Building Strong & Inclusive Communities

Funding:

- £1.09m in community-based learning delivered in Sandwell with 3,400 residents participating.
- £802k WMCA Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund awarded to support three job hubs in the most deprived wards, provide employment support to residents furthest from the labour market and support young people at risk of disengaging from education
- £1.1m Commonwealth Legacy funding via the Inclusive Communities Fund for 27 projects to get more people active, reduce inequalities, improve mental wellbeing; improve access to arts and Culture.
- £1.4m WMCA Commonwealth Legacy Funding towards the energy costs of the Sandwell Aquatic Centre.
- £600k UKSPF for community engagement through Voluntary and Community Sector organisations support and the enhancement of green spaces

Activities:

- Sport England partnership includes £330k to the Black Country Commonwealth Active Communities over the next 3 years to develop a physical activity platform, digital inclusion post and delivery programme to address locally identified barriers.
- £160k Sport England partnership grant to Black Country ICS to pilot embedding physical activity into the children and young people mental health care pathway and over £100k to get more young people from marginalised communities into social action.
- Mental Wellbeing Support: Sandwell College participates in the Thrive at College pilot, providing a whole-college approach to mental health and targeted support to students.



Jobs for Everyone

Provide A Good Education To Level 2 For Those Who Need It

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Funding Support:

- £3.8m in adult skills funding supporting residents with English, maths, digital skills and language acquisition (ESOL) training, supporting 5,100 enrolments
- £563k in Multiply funding offer numeracy training to 550 Sandwell residents
- £1.2m funding secured through Sport England Partnership

Activities:

- Digital Inclusion, a partnership between Sandwell Adult and Family Learning and Sandwell Council, offers digital and employability courses. The programme reaches diverse groups of residents across the community to develop the skills they need for life and work.
- Sandwell has the highest number of non-internet users in the UK. Established a new foundation offer with funding flexibilities available to colleges to develop multi layered programmes, including language acquisition, digital skills, English, maths and vocational qualification aligned to labour market need e.g. health care, logistics

Priya Begum, a mother of two, has had support from the project, said: "I have completed two basics courses and have now gained the confidence to go onto an Essential Digital Skills course that will not only mean I have a formal qualification but can also now help my children with their homework. I feel confident that I can work safely online and reassured that I can keep an eye on what my children do online so I know that they are safe too."



Jobs for Everyone

Moving Residents Into Employment & Careers Progression

Funding Support:

- £3.77m investment in pre-employment programmes e.g. SWAPs, sector gateways with 3,200 starts
- The Thrive into Work Supported Employment programme operates in Wolverhampton under a group funding arrangement Sandwell and West Birmingham worth £689k, funding 75 residents in Wolverhampton with personalised support under the principle of individual placement support
- £57,500 secured through Careers Enterprise Company leading to secondary schools in Sandwell receiving support from the Careers Hub.
- £1.6m UKSPF People & Skills Funding in 2024/2025 with over 5,000 residents forecast to be engaged

Activities:

- Developed Path2Apprenticeship providing a transition route for young adults not yet ready for an apprenticeship
- Sandwell College and Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust recently announced an agreement, which is set to secure hundreds of job and training opportunities for WMCA. Sandwell College learners will benefit from exclusive access to learning opportunities within the hospital. The initiative, supported by Sandwell Council, the West Midlands Combined Authority, and the Government's Town Fund, is vital to meeting the growing demand for new and upskilled staff in the NHS.
- Regional Careers Programme (14-19) – targeted careers and education programme for Young People aged 14-19 years old who are not in employment, education, or training (NEETs).



Jobs for Everyone

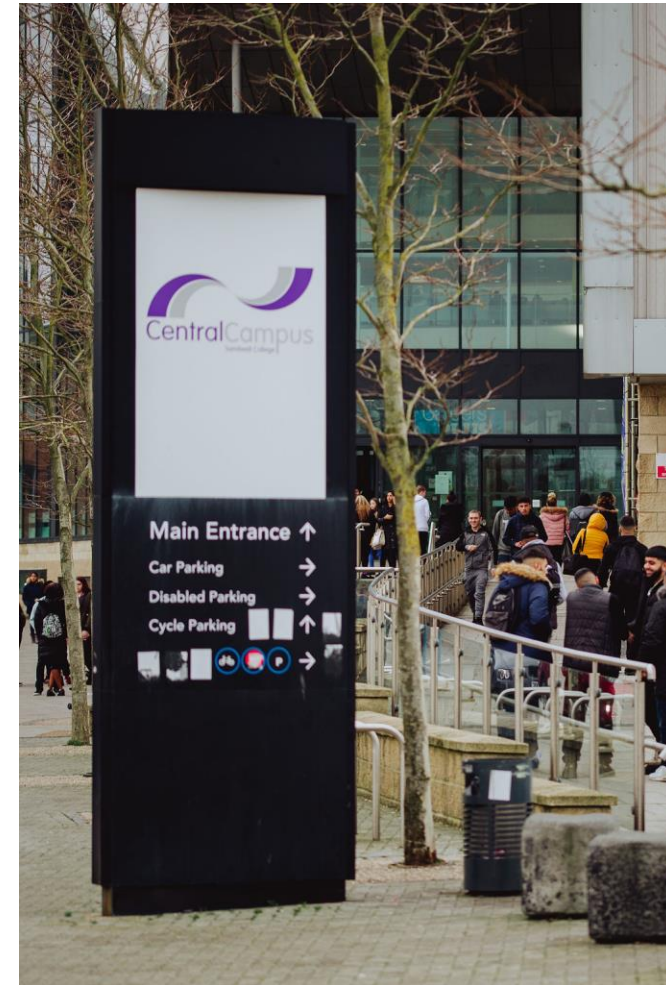
Meeting Future Skills Needs Through Upskilling & Reskilling

Funding Support:

- £4.2m investment in skills training at Level 3+ leading to 1,800 enrolments
- £1.3m investment from Free Courses for Jobs

Activities:

- 890 residents accessing their first level 3 training programme to support career progression
- Level 3 apprenticeships at Sandwell College and Direct Line Group provide residents with the skills and experience that place them on a sustainable career path. Courses like Apprentice Mechanic provide pathways into employment and secure futures.
- Skills Bootcamps providing intensive upskilling and retraining in sectors such as digital, early years, welding and retrofit



Growth for everyone

We're helping businesses grow, supporting innovation and creativity. We're making sure everyone benefits and the environment is protected.

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Growth for Everyone

Economy & Business Growth West Midlands

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Project	Budget	Spend to Q3	Q4 Forecast
SME Advice	£400,344	£265,783	£134,561
SME Grants	£1,764,501	£1,152,041	£612,460
NZ Grants	£548,382	£145,308	£403,075

Project	Output	Actuals to Q3	Target
SME Advice	Enterprises receiving non-financial support	325	410
	Potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready	N/A	N/A
SME Grants	Enterprises receiving grants	34	54
	Potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready	N/A	N/A
NZ Grants	Enterprises receiving grants	11	31

Local Allocation – Start up/Enterprise Hub – Years 2 & 3

Number of enterprises receiving financial support other than grants – 38 (forecast 40)

Local Allocation – Pop Up Business School – Years 2 & 3

Number of entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready - 72 (forecast 60)
Number of new enterprises created as a result of support – 12 (forecast 10)

Local Allocation – Start Up Grants - Years 2 & 3

Number of enterprises receiving grants – 17 (forecast 50)
Number of new enterprises created as a result of support – 11 (forecast 25)

Growth for Everyone

Business Growth West Midlands – Success Story

Founded in 2009 in the heart of the Black Country and supported by a team of 15 full-time employees, Alpha-Rowen is the UK's largest specialist sub-contractor for the Austempering of spring steel with a Heat Treatment process that strengthens metal for the spring and presswork market. As an energy-intensive business which uses furnace burners daily, energy costs are a significant expense and with gas prices rising six-fold, the viability of the business was in jeopardy and at real risk of closure. They registered with BEAS in the hopes of improving the energy efficiency of their site and ultimately reducing costs to the business.

Energy Assessment & Findings

After registering online, they were referred to the local delivery partner, Pro Enviro, who ran an assessment which revealed that modifying the control on Alpha-Rowen's furnace would improve energy efficiency and result in reduced gas consumption. It was also noted that once the number of furnaces was reduced and all put onto one site, that the company's monitoring system would require re-configuration to be able to track energy consumption.

Implementation & Impact

Once Alpha-Rowen implements the changes recommended by Pro Enviro—optimising the furnace burner and reconfiguring the energy monitoring system—the company is expected to save enough natural gas to heat approximately 30 homes for a year. This will also reduce annual carbon emissions by an amount equivalent to taking 12 cars off the road.

Mike Leach, Managing Director of Alpha-Rowen says: *“I was delighted by the depth of insights gained from the free business energy assessment provided by the Black Country delivery team (Pro Enviro) for the BEAS-Decarbonisation Net Zero Programme. The recommendations supported our plan and the assessments provided were not only practical but should also lead to a reduction in our energy costs. Without the Grant Funding support, we wouldn't have been able to move forwards. The added benefit is that the quantified opportunity it generated also made the grant application far more straightforward.”*



Growth for Everyone

Environment

- Through the DEFRA-funded air quality programme we have worked with the council to co-identify sensor locations and have **installed 14 air quality sensors across Sandwell**. We have also delivered an air quality behaviour change trial to test what framing is the most effective for raising awareness about Sandwell's Smoke Control Area as well as an air quality literacy training course for officers and elected officials and held public engagement events.
- Through the Local Investment in Natural Capital programme, WMCA and our consultants have supported Sandwell with nature finance workshops to build a regional natural capital project pipeline. **6 projects in Sandwell are in the pipeline to attract funding and investment at scale**. WMCA are also supporting Sandwell with a Biodiversity Net Gain accelerator programme.
- The WMCA has **funded 11 community environment projects in Sandwell** through the Community Green Grants and Community Environment Fund projects. This includes the LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) 'Creating Conscious Consumers in Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Birmingham' project, providing opportunities for inner city children to attend farm visits and workshops to improve their understanding of where food comes from and how it is produced, helping them to become conscious consumers in the future.
- Throughout the year the West Midlands Forest Partnership has supported local authority officers and local community groups with free trees for planting on environmental projects. More than 4000 trees have been distributed where appropriate requests have been received.



Growth for Everyone

Devolution

The region is set to receive an Integrated Funding Settlement (Integrated Settlement) on 1 April 2025. The Integrated Settlement will include the majority of the funding the region receives for local transport, adult skills and employment support, housing and regeneration, domestic energy efficiency, local growth programmes and place-based economic development. It will provide WMCA Board with additional flexibilities and choices over how to prioritise resources to address the long-term challenges and opportunities facing the West Midlands.

Functional Strategies will underpin the delivery of infrastructures and services across the region, complemented by Place-Based Strategies that have a particular focus on targeted geographic areas.

The functional strategies are proposed to be:

- Local Transport
- Adult Skills and Employment
- Housing and Regeneration Functional Strategy
- Net Zero (Buildings Retrofit Pilot) Functional Strategy
- Local Growth and Place Functional Strategy

Sandwell's Place Based Strategy covers the whole Borough with 3 distinct opportunity zones – West Bromwich Town Centre, Smethwick, and the Levelling Up Zone in the west, which covers Wednesbury and Tipton. With a core set of asks around Housing, Regeneration + Transport, Skills development, and Business growth, to create a wealthier, more resilient Sandwell. The focus is on transforming our places, creating and connecting opportunities for our residents and businesses, through increasing investment into our Borough and positioning Sandwell as the centre for Advanced Manufacturing and Health by growing our local and regional supply chain productivity, efficiency, skills, innovation, and deeper integration into nationally significant growth sectors.



Homes for Everyone

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Homes for Everyone

Housing

Prog. Status	Project Name
Complete	Mill Lane
Approved	Abberley Street
	Bull Street Phase 1
	Cranford Way
	Fountain Lane
	Fountain Lane Phase 2
	Friar Park
	Midland Met

The Directorate holds 4 weekly Local Authority meetings Sandwell's Assistant Director of Spatial Planning & Growth and the team to discuss property and grant cases. More recently, focused meetings have taken place to identify the local authority's key projects and how these can be serviced through WMCA grant assistance.

Colleagues in the WMCA Strategic Assets team are also in dialogue with the Local Authority regarding key sites at Cranford Way and Abberley Street.

Sites supported through WMCA grant include Fountain Lane phases 1&2 which is due to be completed in 24/25 along with the Midland Metropolitan Learning Campus which is under construction, piling having been recently completed.

The WMCA continue to work with Sandwell regarding their pipeline of projects which include Old Majestic, Bull Street Phase 1, West Bromwich Town Centre and Rolfe Street. Alongside this pipeline, Officers from the Development and Delivery team are actively collaborating with Sandwell on Friar Park through the weekly JV Forum and bi-weekly project team meeting, supporting the preparation of a planning application and procurement of a development partner.



Homes for Everyone

Retrofit – Success Story

In January we launched our largest-ever home energy efficiency upgrade programme.

As part of funding package, the WMCA will spend £36 million to ease pressure on the finances of councils, schools and colleges and other public sector organisations such as the NHS and emergency services by making their buildings cheaper to heat and power.

The funding will also unlock further investment in housing of around £80 million from councils and their housing providers.

The Mayor announced his plans during a visit to Friar Park in Wednesbury, Sandwell, where 200 social homes built between the First and Second World Wars are now being improved.

Holly Farmer is one of the Friar Park residents who are having their homes improved - after her gas and electricity bills doubled over the last three years.

Thanks to WMCA funding, new insulation and solar panels to power her home with renewable energy have been installed at the 1930s semi detached house where she lives with her two children.

Holly said: "In the winter with young children it can be a struggle to keep the gas and electricity bill down, so any saving is good, particularly on such a big household cost. With shopping, you can make changes but with energy there is no leeway and it can be hard to cut those costs. So having solar panels and better insulation is a brilliant opportunity to be able save some money."

Journeys for everyone

We're connecting communities
and making travel easier, safer
and more affordable for
everyone

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Journeys for Everyone

Workwise

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199

Sandwell Residents Supported

Workwise tickets are supporting access to employment for people across Sandwell. TfWM's Employment Outreach team works with Job Centres, Libraries, local Employers and Training Providers to promote travel schemes relating to employment in the area.

Get free travel
to work*

workwise

*Available on selected tickets.
Terms and conditions apply.

The graphic features a dark purple background with white text and illustrations of a red bus, an orange tram, and a blue tram. A white Swift card is shown with the Swift logo and the number 1234 5678 9101 1123. The word 'workwise' is written in white at the bottom left, and the disclaimer '*Available on selected tickets. Terms and conditions apply.' is at the bottom right.

Journeys for Everyone

Ring & Ride and Demand Responsive Transport

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19,973

Journeys completed in 2024.

Use of the West Midlands Ring & Ride service continues to increase and has seen a recent introduction of newer vehicles into the fleet in Sandwell

TfWM are currently undertaking a procurement exercise for the provision of Ring & Ride service in the region, to include:

- Service enhancements and modernisation to deliver the endorsed Target Operating Model for the service
- A wider roll out of booking journeys through the app, introduction of a resized and more modern and rebranded fleet, a review of the fares and ticketing strategy and increased engagement and promotion to ensure greater diversity
- There will be a greater emphasis on partnership delivery to deliver this service modernisation.



West
Midlands
Bus

RING & RIDE

Journeys for Everyone

Buses

£1.875

Million annualised cost of subsidised routes.

Where routes are not deemed commercially viable by the private operators, but TfWM have deemed them socially necessary we step in and subsidise the route. The price above is based on prices as they stand today and won't include inflation due throughout the year. This figure also doesn't mean that Sandwell residents do not get the benefit of tenders which start or are classed as being predominantly in another area. Similarly, some of these tenders may cross into neighbouring areas.

Buses in the West Midlands are the most important form of public transport for local journeys with 4 in 5 public transport trips in the region are taken on a bus. Bus use continues to grow with over a 10% increase in passenger numbers since January 2024. Overall annual patronage in 2024 was just under 250 million; this is c.95% of pre-covid levels with reduced travel by English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) pass holders accounting for the difference.



Journeys for Everyone

Bus Services – Passenger Incentive Programme

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12,066

codes issued for free bus travel

The passenger incentive scheme developed by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) is primarily aimed at employers and large organisations to encourage their staff to leave cars at home and try the bus. It is part of a Government-funded programme to boost journeys and protect services across the West Midlands.

55 organisations across Sandwell, and some which cover the wider Black Country area but will include Sandwell in their delivery have received support via this initiative over the calendar year and with campaigns still active this figure is likely to increase.

A total of 12,066 codes have been issued for free bus travel (differing lengths of time and 9315 being first time issues), 5983 have been redeemed to date and a total of 5472 used for travel.

Support provided under the Passenger Incentive Programme has accounted for 237,645 of individual bus journeys made to date under the scheme from these 55 organisations with the codes used to date.

Residents were able to enjoy free bus travel between Monday 9th and Friday 13th December, from 7pm until 2.59am the following day as well as on January 1st, all of the region's buses were free to use for the day.



Journeys for Everyone

Cross City Bus

As part of Cross City Bus package 3, TfWM are continuing to develop proposals for Burnt Tree Junction and Dudley Rd on the approach to Oldbury Ringway together with Sandwell and Black Country Transport Officers. The proposals for Burnt Tree Junction have now been publicly consulted on twice and we are now completing detailed design at Burnt Tree. The Burnt Tree proposals dovetail with the surrounding CRSTS and Active Travel England schemes on the A4123 and A461 corridors.

TfWM are also working with Sandwell and Birmingham Officers to look at other improvements that could be considered on the Cross City Bus Package 3 corridor from Icknield Port Road in Birmingham to Smethwick via Cape Hill to provide more reliable bus journey times, improved pedestrian environment, improve air quality and improved multi-modal connectivity within the vicinity of the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital and Learning Campus.

As part of Cross City Bus package 6 we are continuing to develop proposals for the West Bromwich to Birmingham A41 corridor. We have worked with SMBC officers to ensure that the active travel scheme on West Bromwich high street to the west of M5J1 delivers improved bus stop layouts and infrastructure and are working with Black Country Transport to consider wider proposals for M5J1 and Holyhead Road to the SMBC boundary. Proposals for this corridor to the East of the Sandwell Boundary in Birmingham were consulted on between September and December 2024 and we are now refining these proposals based on the feedback received.



**Journeys
for Everyone**

**City Region
Sustainable Transport
Settlement**

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£54 million

Allocated to projects promoted by Sandwell MBC

The City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) is a consolidated fund for local transport investment in England's eight large Metropolitan areas. The UK Government has committed at least £4.2bn of new money over the next five years, from financial year 2022/23 to financial year 2026/27. Existing funding for small scale Transport Capital Improvement Schemes and highways maintenance will also be rolled into CRSTS as a move towards greater consolidation of Transport Capital Funding Streams.

The interventions with the West Midlands CRSTS Programme have been selected to maximise growth outcomes, enable modal shift, and improve accessibility – especially in traditionally under-served and deprived areas of the Region.

There is further significant CRSTS funding allocated to projects at least in part in Dudley which are promoted by TfWM and Black Country Transport. These include projects such as the Wednesbury to Merry Hill Metro Extension and Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Programme.



Journeys for Everyone

Local Transport Plan

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A new Local Transport Plan (LTP5) is in development by WMCA, with a Core Strategy approved a consultation on draft Big Moves in 2023. Work continues on the four LTP5 Area Strategies and the Implementation Plan.

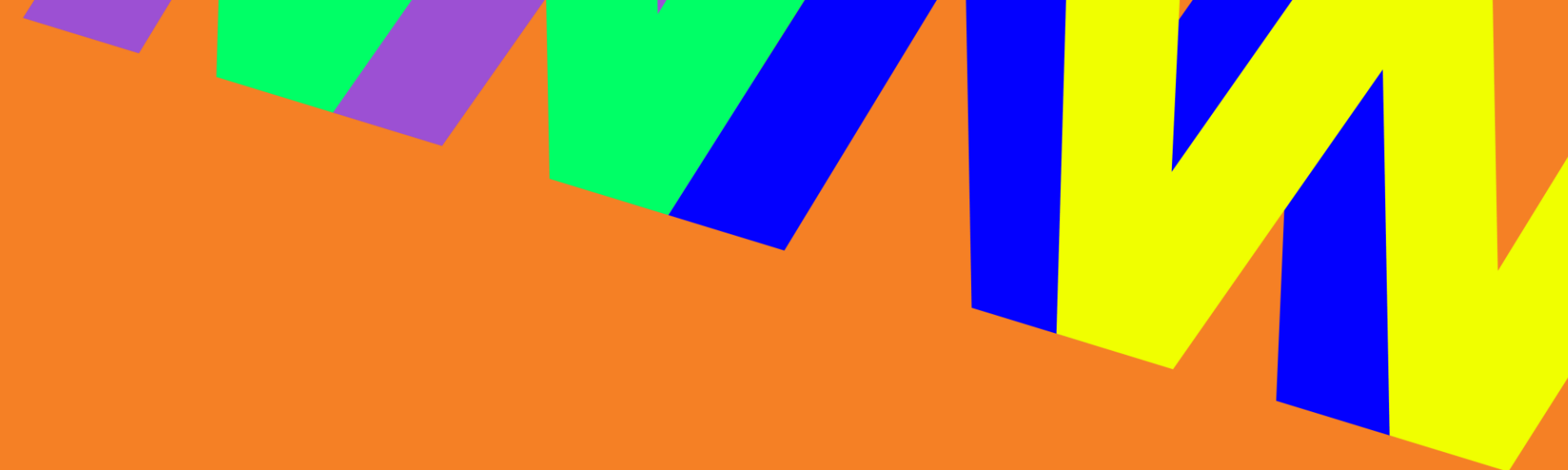
Government has stated that they expect LTPs to play a key role in setting local priorities for investment. The recent consultation on reform of the National Planning Policy Framework also highlights the need for vision-led transport planning.

Whilst the work to begin consultation on the final elements of the LTP is now largely complete. It is planned that consultation takes place on the Area Strategies in Summer 2025 - with final adoption of the full WM LTP5 later in 2025.

Informal engagement on the draft LTP5 Area Strategies with TfWM's *Keep the West Midlands Moving* online community took place in June 2024. This showed that there was broad agreement that the region needed to take more difficult decisions to deliver better outcomes and that there was a need to focus on localised measures to support behaviour change rather than spending significant sums on a limited number of projects.

TfWM will continue to work closely with Local Authority Officers on finalising the LTP and, in particular, the Area Strategy and Implementation Plan.





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