

News story: Cutting-edge digital map to boost Midlands engine

Local business and council leaders across the Midlands will receive up to £1.5 million to pioneer cutting-edge technology to identify the best investment and regeneration opportunities across the area.

The Midlands Engine Partnership, in collaboration with the Geospatial Commission, will use the funding to develop a digital map of the region combining vast amounts of existing public and private sector data linked to location – covering infrastructure, local services, housing and other developments.

Bringing this information about the Midlands together in one place for the first time will allow for better, faster and more informed decisions around health, education, housing, trade and tourism.

The move will help create jobs, benefit the local economy and increase productivity. For example, land earmarked for housebuilding could be identified by other sectors as an opportunity to invest in developing nearby public assets, such as a school or office complex, as well as installing next-generation technologies, such as 5G connectivity.

On a visit to Derby, the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Robert Jenrick, said:

In last week's Budget, the Chancellor pledged to fuel the Midlands Engine and back the region's growth and today we are building on that.

By opening up this valuable data to both investors and developers we will create greater opportunities across the Midlands in vital areas like housebuilding.

Through the harnessing of this data, we are encouraging both public and private sectors to work in smarter, more joined-up ways that will create jobs, boost productivity and grow the economy here in Derby and across the Midlands.

The work is part of the government's drive to maximise the value of data linked to locations, which could generate £11 billion a year. The work is led by the Geospatial Commission and was announced by the Chancellor in November 2017.

Cabinet Office Minister for Implementation, Oliver Dowden MP, said:

This project will further cement the UK's place as a geospatial

world leader, once again showing our commitment to providing more opportunities for tech companies to flourish, including small businesses.

Technology using this location data is revolutionising our economy. From navigating public transport to tracking supply chains and planning efficient delivery routes, these digital services are set to become part of everyday life and business in the Midlands.

Midlands Engine Chairman Sir John Peace said:

This really is great news for everyone in the Midlands Engine Partnership. This will fund an invaluable one-stop digital map for local authorities that will allow them to work much faster and more efficiently.

At the Midlands Engine we have committed to supporting the build of 600,000 new homes in the next 15 years. This is an ambitious target and the tool will support local authorities by giving them the information that they need to identify suitable development sites and work in a more joined-up way.

The mapping tool will also allow faster and more informed decisions with ready access to maps of utilities, surgeries and educational establishments.

Further information

- The Chancellor [announced in November 2017](#) a new Geospatial Commission to maximise the value of all UK government data linked to location, and to create jobs and growth in a modern economy.
- Funding from the Geospatial Commission is subject to business case approval, and will cover initial start up costs and the first year of operation, with a view to the map becoming self-sustaining after this point
- A similar initiative was recently undertaken by Greater Manchester Combined Authority, which developed a digital map of assets and investment. It is estimated that the map saves planners and developers between one and three hours every time it is used. See the Greater Manchester Open Data Infrastructure Map [online](#).
- Through the Midlands Engine Strategy, the government has set out its commitment to making the Midlands an even better place to live, work, study and do business. The strategy, launched last year, includes £20 million for the Midlands Skills Challenge to make sure that everyone

across the region is equipped with the skills they need to thrive, as well as £4 million to support the Midlands Engine Partnership.

- The government is also backing the Midlands through investment in vital transport links, such as HS2 which will include a new East Midlands station between Nottingham and Derby.
- Last year, the West Midlands Combined Mayoral Authority received £250 million as part of the Transforming Cities Fund towards upgrading transport infrastructure. At the Budget, this fund was extended to 22/23, providing a further £71.5 million for the West Midlands. The Derby and Nottingham city region, Leicester and Stoke-on-Trent were recently shortlisted for a share of the £1.3 billion competitive element of the fund.