

Local Enterprise Partnership

01 July 2021

Name Change and Branding

Is the paper exempt from the press and public?	No
Purpose of this report:	Discussion
Funding Stream:	Not applicable
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Has it been included on the Forward Plan?	Not a Key Decision

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Executive Summary:

The decision by the Mayoral Combined Authority to rebrand as the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority provides an opportunity for the MCA, LEP and MCA Executive to review its ambition and strategy for promoting South Yorkshire to potential investors, talent and visitors. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the challenges in developing its strategy, including the need to develop an approach based on insights and a clear understanding of how to reach and influence desired target audiences. The paper also seeks to ascertain the LEP board's preferences for its own role taking the brand forward.

What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?

The name change to reflect the MCA and LEP's decision-making geography focused on South Yorkshire arguably better reflects the identification people, places and businesses have with South Yorkshire as a region, providing an opportunity to ensure its work and impact is better understood. However, the decision poses the question as to how the region will be promoted to national and international audiences. A strong place brand may be regarded as critical to catalyse the ambitions of the Renewal Action Plan (RAP) and Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), for both economic growth and inclusion. A strong, unified, ambitious strategy can catalyse new investment, attract talent and visitors and grow the South Yorkshire economy.

Recommendations:

LEP Board provide feedback on a possible approach to developing a place brand to promote the region's interests.

LEP Board nominate a Member(s) to support the brand development work with the MCA Executive.

LEP Board provides views on the scope of audience insight and research to develop the strategy.

Consideration by any other Board, Committee, Assurance or Advisory Panel

None

1. Background

- 1.1 At January's MCA Board, Members agreed the principle of rebranding the MCA to reflect the organisation's core business, decision making that primarily affects South Yorkshire.
- 1.2 It was recognised that the existing Sheffield City Region brand was developed to represent a wider economic footprint taking in the geography of the non-constituent Council areas. As this no longer applies to the LEP, and as described above no longer relates to the core business of the MCA, it was considered appropriate to change the name and rebrand.
- 1.3 At a meeting of the MCA Board in June, Members agreed to rename the organisation the 'South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority', with the office of Mayor's title changing to 'Mayor of South Yorkshire'.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 Due to the COVID pandemic, national and international marketing activity has reduced significantly, with greater emphasis placed on the immediate relief and recovery of people and businesses in the region.
- 2.2 The rebrand of the MCA, the gradual easing of COVID restrictions and the MCA's focus on the region's long-term recovery and renewal through the Renewal Action Plan, South Yorkshire Renewal Fund and approval of the Strategic Economic Plan provide an opportunity to look again at the approach and ambition for promoting South Yorkshire. The region faces rising and strong competition from other Northern areas, including smaller places who are building their place brands. This has been prompted by changes to work and travel patterns arising from the COVID pandemic, including a growing appreciation and pride in local places.
- 2.3 Following the MCA's decision to rebrand, the LEP and its sub brands require review, including Skills Bank, Growth Hub and SCR Invest. However, changes to the MCA and LEP's brand have significant implications beyond names and logos, and a footprint beyond the immediate region – across the North, nationally and internationally.

- 2.4 Accordingly, a more fundamental discussion about the ambition, scope and approach to promoting South Yorkshire is potentially desirable. A strong place brand can catalyse recovery and renewal for South Yorkshire's people, businesses and places, and can play a critical role in unlocking the ambitions of the SEP.
- 2.5 The region's proposition has hitherto focussed heavily on marketing the region's innovation assets to attract investment and businesses to locate in the Sheffield City Region, and not fully encompassed tourism, arts, culture and heritage and quality of life. Evidence suggests there is a direct link between destination marketing and long-term economic growth, and that skilled workers and investors will sacrifice higher earnings to locate in areas with a higher quality of life.
- 2.6 Investment by the MCA and LEP is helping transform the region, supporting a higher quality of life and revitalising places. Coupled with the rich arts, culture and heritage offer, and the ambitions to drive prosperity and opportunity, provide the basis for a powerful strategy and story to promote the region.
- 2.7 To make progress in developing a strategy, the MCA, LEP and MCA Exec need a strong understanding of the target audiences who need to be engaged and influenced. By understanding their perceptions and preoccupations, a strategy to market the region and its sectors outlined in the SEP can be tailored and land with a greater chance of success. This would be the starting point before a strategy is developed in detail.
- 2.8 The LEP Board can play a powerful role in advising and developing the strategy, as well as convening and galvanising stakeholders from a broad range of sectors to promote the region and amplify its success stories, from its civic, private, universities, anchors, arts, culture and heritage sectors and places, allowing their respective specialisms and identity to breathe.

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

3.1 Option 1

Begin preparatory work to develop South Yorkshire's place brand and strategy

3.2 LEP Board are asked to provide initial thoughts and/or a steer on their ambition for developing a place brand and an approach to promoting the region.

3.3 LEP Board support and advise on the scope of an insight research exercise to begin developing the strategy, ensuring any work undertaken is informed by the perceptions and preoccupations of stakeholders we are trying to reach and engage outside the region.

3.4 LEP Board nominate Members to sponsor and support the strategy development with the MCA Executive Communications and Marketing and External Affairs teams.

3.5 Option 1 Risks and Mitigations

The time involved to commission, interpret and operationalise insights into a strategy is likely to be significant, however this is preferred to ensure any strategy has the strongest chance of success and buy-in. If LEP Board are supportive, it is advised to pursue the strategy development at the earliest opportunity to mitigate

any further unnecessary delays and provide expertise through a Board Sponsor to inform the strategy development.

3.6 Option 2
Do nothing.

3.7 LEP Board may decide not to pursue work to promote the region.

3.8 Option 2 Risks and Mitigations

Doing nothing risks leaving the region's proposition incomplete and out of date, leading to a vacuum where South Yorkshire's reputation is defined for us, rather by the MCA and LEP and stakeholders within the region. Pursuing a strategy without insights risks undermining efforts to promote the region successfully and missing out on investment. As a minimum, work should be undertaken to establish an alliance of ambassadors willing to promote the region.

3.9 Recommended Option
Option 1

4. Consultation on Proposal

4.1 Ensuring there is broad stakeholder support in the region for developing and driving a place brand is vital to its success, and significant mapping and engagement will be undertaken.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision:

5.1 A timeline for the strategy will be developed by Daniel Wright, in consultation with the LEP Board.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice

6.1 The adopted Business Plan and Budget for 2021/22 provides for resource to enable the rebranding activity described in this report.

7. Legal Implications and Advice

7.1 Not applicable

8. Human Resources Implications and Advice

8.1 Not applicable

9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice

9.1 Not applicable

10. Climate Change Implications and Advice

10.1 Not applicable

11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice

11.1 Not applicable

12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice.

12.1 Developing a place brand for South Yorkshire will require significant communications and marketing activity, with an effective strategy helping to underpin and accelerate the success of the MCA's business growth and inclusion ambitions arising from the SEP. The MCA Executive team would undertake the work, in close concert with partners.

List of Appendices Included

A Branding and Marketing South Yorkshire

Background Papers:

None