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Stewart Towe CBE
Chairman
Black Country
Local Enterprise Partnership

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LEPs - Opportunity & Challenge

- Who is asking who the questions?
- Removing the Barriers to Growth
- No cash – no powers! A leap of faith by business
- Black Country approach – self motivated and doing more with existing resource

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Black Country Strategy

- Focus on private sector growth
- Local leadership – local incentives
- A new approach to local growth that puts business at the heart – and in the lead on strategy with public sector partners
- Creating the <u>conditions</u> for growth
- A new unit of business – functional economic area
- Officials on tap and not on top. No guidance and no returns to the centre, but a move to co-production and real partnership working

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The Process so far……

- Himley I (Open Business Forum to discuss submission to Government)
- Black Country Submission – September 2010
- Approved December 2010
- LEP Board - Ministerial Approval 28 Jan 2011
- Board meeting monthly

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The Process so far……

- LEP Alliances, pillars and cross-boundary working
- Quarterly review at Open Business Forums. Himley II was March 17th 2011
- Next open forum July 2011
- Review of board membership and effectiveness – Spring 2012

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The BC LEP Priorities

- Education, Employability & Skills
- Transport & Infrastructure
- Planning
- Business Advice & Support
- Access to Finance & Investment
- International Trade and Inward Investment

Overall: Improve Perception and Communication including promotion of the visitor economy.

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How Are Government responding?

Example: New approaches to Planning & Transport

More streamlined and positive approach to planning – supporting and facilitating growth:

- Presumption in favour of sustainable development – making the default answer to development – yes!
- National Planning Policy Framework – 1000 pages to less than 100
- Neighbourhood Plans, Local Development Orders – real local control.

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How Are Government responding?

- Greater role for and expectation on local partners (LAs and LEPs) to co-operate on strategic planning issues

Unlocking the role of transport in helping local areas to grow.

- There is the potential for a significant devolution of local transport capital funding and decision making

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The Challenges

- See Government as an enabler, opening things up. Build your contacts
- Work with LA partners on upping the PACE of change. Stick with strategy, hold partners to account for delivery
- Get buy in from your communities using common sense strategies to improve perception and communication
- Believe in a more streamlined and positive approach to the future

Thank you