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5 Canal Wharf
Leeds LS11 5PS

To: The Mayoral Candidate
Named in the Address

from: Bill Adams
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30 April 2021

Dear colleague,

Working people's priorities for the incoming West Yorkshire mayor

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) is the voice of Britain at work. We exist to improve working life and promote equality for everyone.

The TUC brings together more than 5.5 million working people who belong to our 48 member unions. We support trade unions to grow and thrive, and we stand up for everyone who works for a living. Every day we campaign for more and better jobs, and a more equal and prosperous country.

The TUC in Yorkshire & the Humber represents half a million working people, including 22% of workers in West Yorkshire. Trade unions are present in half of all workplaces in West Yorkshire, and our pay bargaining covers 24% of employees across the city region. We work closely with our affiliated unions to make sure the voice of working people is heard by business, government, in local communities, and across civil society.

We are at the heart of West Yorkshire's economy, and engaging with us is crucial to the success of the region.

The new mayoral office provides a unique opportunity for West Yorkshire to steer its own economic recovery and future growth, and we have clear asks for what this must look like, if our economy is to work for all our communities.

We write to you to set out our priorities for the new mayor as a trade union movement. We hope you are able to get on board with all of our demands as a candidate, and we look forward to working with the successful mayoral candidate on these priorities.

Overview: jobs, economic recovery & climate emergency

West Yorkshire's economy is facing unprecedented crises: economic, Covid-19 and climate emergency. But ordinary working people should not be the ones bearing this burden. The new mayor must recognise the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on working mothers, key workers, workers in precarious employment, the self employed, those living in poverty, young people, and black, Asian and minority ethnic workers.

The communities and working people of West Yorkshire understand better than anyone else the impact of an unjust transition, in our pit villages and mill towns. West Yorkshire's economy is one of the most carbon intensive in the country. Thousands of jobs are at risk, and five of the top 25 emitting companies in Yorkshire are located in West Yorkshire.

Responding to the climate emergency must mean a just transition for all communities. Far reaching measures to address the climate emergency need to be implemented. Devolved government and business must work together with unions to create jobs in a green recovery.

This means radical investment in green infrastructure that will create and support high quality green jobs and support a transition to a more sustainable economy for all our communities.

As well as the powers and funding available in the devolution deal, the new mayor will have unique convening powers to drive forward this agenda, bringing business and unions round the table to hammer out a plan.

Wherever the mayor deploys their considerable resources, we want to see commitments to working with unionised contractors, social value procurement conditions that guarantee high pay, good terms and conditions, climate friendly practices and union access. These will set strong examples for the rest of the region's economy, especially in large scale investment projects.

In key areas the new mayor will be able to achieve change. We have set out below our priorities for the powers and funding you will have as mayor.

Transport

Transforming West Yorkshire's public transport network into a system fit for the 21st century will be key to the levelling up agenda and in achieving our climate ambitions. Mass transit: The new mayor must urgently accelerate the West Yorkshire Mass Transit network. The TUC is calling for spades in the ground within 18 months. This network must touch every community in West Yorkshire, not just be focused on our major urban centres. This is a huge job creation, investment, and climate action opportunity. Skilled, green, union jobs can be created through construction, engineering, and manufacturing, if the Mayor commits to prioritising local providers and requiring them to recognise a union. There is huge potential for cross border growth, with rail centres in Doncaster and Goole well placed to provide the necessary rolling stock if they get the right commitments from the mayor.

Buses: We know that low income workers in West Yorkshire face high barriers to employment as a result of our broken bus system. They are less likely to own a car, and more likely than other workers to rely on buses to access work. But our deregulated bus service is failing them and all our local communities. With fares tripling since 1995, and 36 million fewer bus journeys made in West Yorkshire compared to a decade ago, we need a radical change to fix our broken bus network. We demand that the mayor bring our buses back into public control, and that they begin the franchising process to make this happen within 100 days of taking office.

Rail: The defunding of Transport for the North is a serious setback in our efforts to level up the North. We call on the new mayor to campaign for the restoration of this funding;

campaign for investment in rail including electrification of the region's network; support properly staffed and funded publicly owned railways; and to support the local rail manufacturing industry through social value conditions in any investment the mayor makes.

Housing

Social housing & Retrofitting: TUC commissioned research shows that in this region we can create 20,906 green jobs through building new social housing within the next two years. We can also create 11,189 jobs retrofitting social housing to higher environmental standards. We urge the mayor to prioritise this opportunity for sustainable job creation and use their powers to accelerate investments in social housing.

Skills

The Mayor will have considerable ability to align the devolved skills budget with the employment and green growth needs of the region. Unions are well placed to understand the skills gaps and learning needs of workers who are crucial to a fair and sustainable recovery. We call on the new mayor to work closely with unions to develop a comprehensive lifelong learning strategy and delivery body, to replace the Union Learning Fund unilaterally scrapped by the government.

No matter who wins this May, the new Mayor must move to take bold and radical steps to support job creation, tackle inequality, and promote a green recovery for West Yorkshire. Our priorities are clear, and we look forward to working with the new mayor to achieve them.

Yours sincerely



Bill Adams

Regional Secretary
TUC Yorkshire & the Humber