

WE'RE READY TO LEAD THE WAY ON 'CITY REGION' PLANS

The Tees Valley is 'ready to take the next leap forward in working with Government to make our area one of the economic success stories of the Twenty First Century.'

That is how Hugh Lang, Chair of the Tees Valley Unlimited partnership, today described the bid to become one of the areas to pilot the ambitious new 'City Region Forerunner' project which will see much increased local influence over key issues such as economic development and regeneration, housing and transport.

The Chancellor Alistair Darling is set to announce in next month's Budget at least two areas which will be offered the chance to act as 'forerunners' for the initiative and Tees Valley—widely seen as leading the way in developing partnership working—has been invited to submit a bid.

The proposals, which run to over 200 pages, stress that Tees Valley is 'one of the UK's economic powerhouses' with the potential to help lead the country out of recession. With the largest heavy industrial complex in the country, it contributes £9.6billion to the national economy and has world-class businesses in petrochemicals, steel, renewable energy, biotechnology and engineering— together with one of the country's largest port complexes.

The City Region blueprint sets out arrangements aimed at giving the Tees Valley a much greater influence over all key areas affecting the area's potential, especially in the management of public funding. It also envisages strengthening arrangements to tackle issues such as employment and skills, business and enterprise and strategic transport planning.

Says Hugh Lang "The Tees Valley's pioneering work in bringing together all sections of the community to tackle our economic, environmental and social challenges has gained us national recognition—indeed at our recent conference the Local Government Minister John Healey explained that he used our success in partnership working as an example for other parts of the country

"Last year we were amongst the first areas to sign up to a 'Multi Area Agreement' partnership with the Government which in itself gives us considerably greater freedom and flexibility in the way that funding can be used to reflect our local priorities.

"The move to become a 'City Region Forerunner' would be a natural development of all the work which has gone on over the past decade and we believe that our track record makes us a very strong candidate.

“In addition we have an economic base which puts in a strong position to weather the current economic challenges and deliver real growth in the future. We are not dependent on the service and financial sectors but we do have a strong and resilient industrial base in fields such as chemicals, steel and engineering...and we are becoming a major centre for the industries of the future, such as renewable energy and biotechnology.

“If the Government does give us the green light to become a City Region pioneer it will put us in a very strong position to drive forward economic growth, both regionally and nationally, accelerating the pace at which can put in place the improvements needed to support economic growth, attract jobs and investment—and make the Tees Valley an even more attractive place for people to live and work.”

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