

Annex C: Governance Assurance Statement

The LEP Board has met on six occasions in 2019, plus a public AGM, and continues to be supported by four Advisory Boards that oversee operational work programmes. Over the past year we have maintained robust and transparent operational governance arrangements, applying the highest standards, supported by our accountable body, the North East Combined Authority (NECA).

Nationally, in January 2019, Government issued revised guidelines to LEPs in an updated 'National Local Growth Assurance Framework'. Since then the North East LEP Board has acted to ensure that we continue to adhere to these latest standards, including requirements by 1st April 2020 that at least 33% of our Board are women and 66% are from the private sector.

We take seriously the importance of delivering our responsibilities as a Local Enterprise Partnership through compliance with national best practice guidelines and set out in our [Local Assurance Framework](#) how we make decisions and ensure value for money when we invest in projects across the North East LEP area.

Importantly, this document also sets out how we communicate and publish information to the public about our affairs such as our annual accounts, with the latest accounts being able to be viewed [here](#) on the our accountable body's website. The North East Combined Authority (NECA) S73 Chief Finance Officer arranged for the external audit of our 2018/19 accounts and these have been confirmed as being in good order.

In January 2019 we published a refresh of the North East Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) 2014-2024 and followed up in May 2019 with the publication of our [Delivery Plan 2019/20](#). At the end of the year, we will publish an annual review setting out progress against these plans.

The LEP Board held its first public AGM on 26th September and it was pleasing to have in attendance over 150 local stakeholders.

The North East LEP has continued to receive strong support from the NECA and its constituent local authorities and has also established close working relationships with the North of Tyne Combined Authority, ahead of a proposed transfer in accountable body functions for the LEP from NECA in 2020/21.

The NECA committees perform an important democratic role in being able to review our activities and to hold the LEP to public account. The NECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee has received information on planned key decisions, whilst the Audit and Standards Committee oversees risks and the auditing of services. These committee meetings are public meetings and Board papers can be viewed [here](#). In addition, members of the LEP Executive Team attend on request Scrutiny Committees within individual local authorities and at the North of Tyne Combined Authority.

During 2019 we have strengthened the Executive Team with senior legal and financial officers from the accountable body being co-located who report into the S73 and Monitoring Officers of the accountable body and operate within clear policies and procedures. LEP Board minutes and the register of Board member interests are published on our website and can be viewed [here](#).

In March 2019, we published a video to showcase progress on partner capital projects under our £270m, 6 -year, Local Growth Fund programme. To date this has received 67,000 views and we were delighted in December, to receive a Silver award from the Chartered Institute of Public Relations in recognition of the impact of this promotional campaign.

Looking ahead, the North East LEP will welcome several new private sector Board members early in 2020 and further strengthen the Board with a new representative from the Voluntary and Community Sector.


Signed:
Name: Andrew Hodgson
Position: Chair, North East Local Enterprise Partnership
Date: 16/12/2019


Signed:
Name: Helen Golightly
Position: Chief Executive, North East LEP
Date: 16/12/2019