

**Westminster Higher Education Forum policy conference:
Next steps for universities and their local economies in the UK**

Timing: Morning, Monday, 13th October 2025

*****Taking place online*****



**WESTMINSTER
HIGHER EDUCATION
FORUM**

Draft agenda subject to change

- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 9.05 **Assessing the role of universities in local innovation and skills pipelines**
Greg Wade, Head, Innovation Policy, Universities UK
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.30 **Key considerations for developing the role of universities in local growth**
role of universities in growth missions / strategies to attract inward investment / role of universities in responding to skills needs of local employers / alignment with the AI Opportunities Action Plan and support for regional AI infrastructure and skills / role of universities in convening regional innovation ecosystems / knowledge sharing and strengthening the potential and value of start-ups and spin-outs / aligning institutional strategies with devolved funding and combined authority priorities / data, metrics, and evaluation frameworks for HE impact / supporting lifelong learning / university contribution to wider policy goals
Andrew McPhillips, Chief Economist, Northern Powerhouse Partnership
Senior representative, HE
Senior representative, local authority
Senior representative, employer
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.25 **Supporting place-based innovation - funding, devolution and regional R&D investment**
Senior representative, innovation cluster
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.45 **Chair's closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.50 Break
- 11.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Baroness Royall of Blaisdon
- 11.05 **Developing inclusive and sustainable regional economies through university partnerships**
Senior representative, combined authority
- 11.15 **Commercialising research and driving innovation in local areas**
strategies to support university-business collaboration / innovation-led clusters and the role of HEIs / leveraging regional infrastructure and new funding / use of blended public-private funding models / emerging models such as the Cambridge-Manchester Innovation Partnership / addressing barriers to scale-up and access to private finance / the impact and implementation of the Procurement Act /
Professor Colin Bain, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Research, Durham University
Dr Stuart Wilkinson, CEO, Knowledge Exchange UK
- 11.25 Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.40 **Aligning higher education with regional workforce priorities**
Meg Haskins, Policy Manager, Russell Group
- 11.50 **Impact of students and graduates on local economies - priorities for wider local collaboration**
growing the economic contribution of the student and alumni workforce in local economies / developing new approaches to graduate retention / local employer partnerships, housing incentives, and integrated skills strategies / civic agreements and community-led initiatives / delivering social value through HE partnerships / integrating students into local public service and volunteering networks / implications of fee and visa reform
Professor Daniel Parsons, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation, Loughborough University
Suzanne Golden, Co-Director, Backlit Gallery
Paul Manners, Co-Director, National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement
Senior representative, local authority
- 12.10 Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.30 **Policy priorities for strengthening university contributions to local economic strategy**
Senior representative, policy
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.55 **Chair's and Westminster Higher Education Forum closing remarks**
Baroness Royall of Blaisdon
Sean Cudmore, Westminster Higher Education Forum