

GREATER MANCHESTER

ISSUE 7

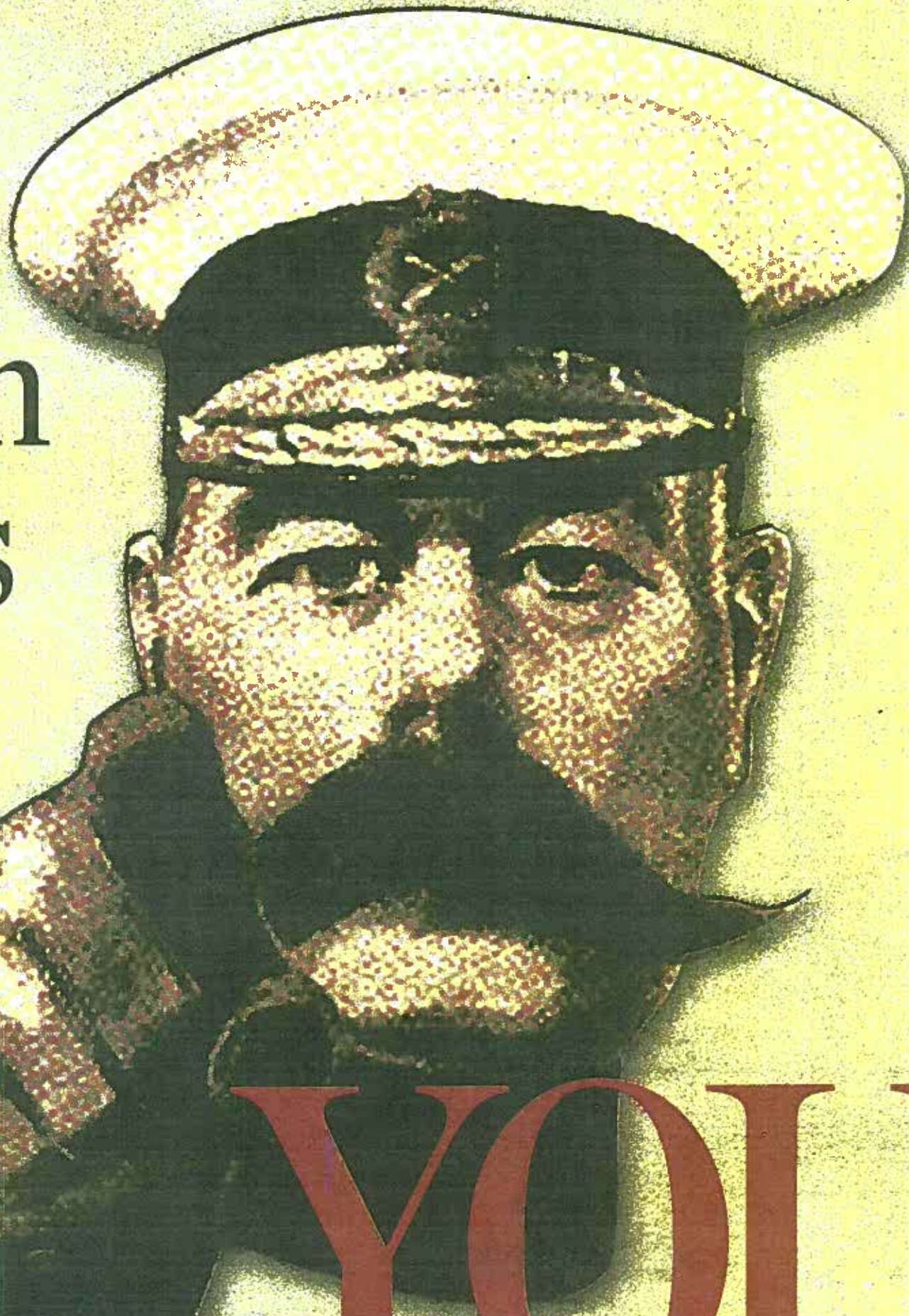
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Your
region
needs




YOU

Recruiting the lucky 13 who will shape
Greater Manchester's future

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Would you care to take your seat?

Thirteen empty chairs await the appointment of the first members of the Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership. The people that fill them will champion recovery and pioneer a new role for private business. As the recruiting process gets underway, **Simon Donohue** discovers that your region may very well need YOU



IT'S the call-up that could determine the future prosperity of our region. The Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership is looking to recruit its first 13-member board to steer the new body in its fight for investment and to champion growth in an era of public spending restraint.

Applications are being sought from people boasting a range of talents – up to four will come from local authorities but the chairman and other eight members are expected to be largely drawn from the private sector.

Many will ask what is in it for them – the rewards are certainly not financial and the task before them is huge. Successful candidates will be expected to devote two days a month to their LEP duties for up to three years – unpaid. But those who take a seat at the table are promised a place right at the heart of the decision making process which may influence the success of the post-cuts economy of this region.

The Greater Manchester LEP is one of the first in the country to have been given the green light by the government. They were set up to replace regional development agencies (RDAs) as partnerships between business and local authorities to direct investment and infrastructure improvements.

However, unlike an RDA, the LEP will not have a budget of its own – it will compete with rivals across the country to act as a conduit to channel resources into Greater Manchester and will bid for cash from the £1bn Regional Growth Fund as well as other sources.

They are designed, in part, to help fulfil the promise that private sector activity will grow to plug the gap left in the wake of public sector cuts. The stated aim is to support partnerships between business and local authorities, tackle major barriers to growth and develop economic strategies to create jobs.

In addition, Greater Manchester's LEP plans to transform the region into a low-carbon economy and connect firms to international markets.

The Greater Manchester LEP board will be expected to provide a lean fighting machine to take on a significant part of the work previously handled by the 450-strong staff at the North West Development Agency (NWDA).

In the north west, where the NWDA is being wound up ahead of a 2012 deadline, it is anticipated that

Continues overleaf

Possible runners and riders for the LEP

It should be a board consisting of the best and most experienced minds in business – eight of the 13 LEP members being proven leaders in their own particular fields of enterprise.

At this stage it's anyone's guess who will form the inaugural Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership, but Greater Manchester Business Week couldn't resist a little guessing game.

An experienced business figure is expected to be the LEP's chairman, a role which might suit the recently retired Manchester Airports Group chief executive Geoff Muirhead.

It's also likely that the influential Peel Holdings – which abandoned plans to establish its own 'Atlantic Gateway' LEP – might seek a seat on the LEP, as it has done on the Cheshire and Warrington LEP.

It will also be interesting to see if the GMLP will include a 'celebrity' board member of the stature of Cheshire and Warrington member Pete Waterman.

"Perhaps musician, author and nightclub owner Peter Hook fancies it?"

Given the role that the LEPs will play in education and training, it is likely that another board position might go to the vice chancellor of one of the Greater Manchester universities.

In terms of the creative media sector, candidates could be drawn from the ranks of the BBC – perhaps BBC North director Peter Salmon – and from the talent pool which emerged from ITV. Now that the Sharp Project is nearing completion, perhaps former Granada boss Sue Woodward would be interested?

The burgeoning financial services sector in Greater Manchester might provide the LEP with an individual like David McKeith, until recently north west senior partner at



Brewer
William Lees Jones



Bookmaker
Fred Done



Ex-airport boss
Geoff Muirhead



Retail magnate
Alan White



Rock star
Peter Hook



BBC director
Peter Salmon



Sharp operator
Sue Woodward



Finance expert
David McKeith



Co-op boss
Peter Marks



Property chief
Chris Oglesby

accountancy giant PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Peter Marks, chief executive of the Co-operative Group, would be another valuable member of the team, as would one of the heads of the region's listed companies.

Other clues about likely contenders are to be found among the list of business advisers to the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities, who include Chris

Oglesby, chief executive of property company Bruntwood; William Lees-Jones, chief executive of Manchester brewer JW Lees; and Alan White, chief executive of Manchester home shopping giant N Brown.

And if anyone were to take a wager on a local bookmaking success story figuring in the LEP's future plans, then it would surely be Fred Done.

Economy which guides Greater Manchester's economic strategy and the existing Association Of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA).

The LEP board will be supported by a small team of officers from AGMA. There will be no additional resources or back-office staff.

Although the members have yet to be chosen, what is known are the names of some of the prominent people who will NOT be on it.

Manchester council chief executive Sir Howard Bernstein and his counterparts at the other Greater Manchester town halls will not take a

place on the LEP board as it is felt that there is more benefit in having them serve instead as advisers.

The same is expected to be the case for the heads of the 'Manchester family' organisations, including Angie Robinson, chief executive of MIDAS, Manchester's Investment Development Agency Service.

The precise scope and function of the LEPs is still emerging.

Dialogue is continuing between the government and the boards of the proposed LEP organisations about how much of the work they will take on that was previously

undertaken by the RDAs. It is proposed that the LEP will meet on a monthly basis, in advance of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the AGMA executive, and that it will begin operations on April 1.

John Early, former chairman of property giant AMEC and chairman of the shadow LEP, which is handling the transition of powers to the new authority, is clear about its significance.

He says: "The role is to act as a lead in driving growth in the private sector in Greater Manchester, to identify the things which inhibit that growth, and put mechanisms in place which will bridge whatever problems there are."

Early says it is too soon to give a detailed picture of the role the LEP will play. However, he says that an application has already been made to the Regional Growth Fund and that backers of the Greater Manchester LEP are keen to establish a 'recyclable fund' – one which generates profits which can then be used to subsidise further ventures.

Early says that the main advantage for the Greater Manchester LEP over the NWDA is that it will be a far leaner organisation and that it will be locally focused.

"It's going to oversee the economic strategy for the Manchester family organisations," he said.

"In recruiting the right people, it's important that we widen the net as far as possible so that those who are already senior people in their particular sectors will get involved.

"We need people who are really prepared to make a contribution. Ideally, we would like to recruit one person from each type of industry.

"While they will give on average two days per month of their time, the demands we make of them are likely to be spasmodic – geared to provide the benefits of their particular area of expertise at the most appropriate time. What we want to do is to encourage innovation."

There are more clues about the powers of the LEPs in a June open letter to local authority and business leaders.

Jointly signed by Business Secretary Vince Cable and Eric Pickles, secretary of state for communities and local government, it gave some indication of the government's rationale.

"We anticipate that local enterprise partnerships will wish to provide the strategic leadership in their areas to set out local economic priorities," it reads.

The letter spells out the coalition government's determination to

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there will be five LEPs. So far, the government has given the green light to four: Greater Manchester, Cheshire and Warrington, Merseyside, and Cumbria.

Backers of the proposed LEP serving Lancashire have been asked by the government to answer further questions about their application.

The new Greater Manchester LEP will be formed alongside the Greater Manchester Combined Authority – the new regional 'supercouncil' approved by the government last year, the Commission For The New

"rebalance the economy towards the private sector".

"We regard local enterprise partnerships as being central to this vision," it adds.

"Partnerships will therefore want to create the right environment for business and growth in their areas, by tackling issues such as planning and housing, local transport and infrastructure priorities, employment and enterprise and the transition to the low carbon economy.

"Supporting small business start-ups will therefore be important.

"They will want to work closely with universities and further education colleges, in view of their importance to local economies, and with other relevant stakeholders.

"In some areas, tourism will also be an important economic driver."

In terms of geographic influence, the government says that it wants partnerships to "better reflect the natural economic geography of the areas they serve."

For more information visit www.gmleprecruitment.com. The closing date for applications is noon on Monday, February 21.

The selection process

Applicants are being told the most important quality is that they "must live or have an active business interest within Greater Manchester".

The new chairman of the Greater Manchester LEP is expected to be a prominent local business leader, but could be somebody drawn from the voluntary sector or education.

They will not be associated with any of the 10 local authorities within the Association Of Greater Manchester Authorities.

However, the LEP board will include up to four local authority members drawn from AGMA.

It will be left to the AGMA board itself to determine which of the 10 Greater Manchester local authority leaders should be chosen.

The interview panel will consist of the chairman and three vice-chairmen of AGMA, plus one additional independent individual, probably from the world of business, and

preferably from within Greater Manchester. So far, we know the names of the of AGMA executives who will be putting the raw candidates through their paces.

They are AGMA chairman Lord Peter Smith; Sir Richard Leese, leader of Labour-controlled Manchester council; Bob Bibby, leader of Conservative-controlled Bury council; and Howard Sykes, leader of Oldham council.

The appointment process will be scrutinised by the same AGMA scrutiny committee which already scrutinises AGMA policy rulings.

The scrutiny committee consists of 30 democratically elected local councillors, three from each of the 10 AGMA authorities.

Replacing the NWDA

The Greater Manchester LEP will take on some of the functions of the now defunct North West Development Agency.

The NWDA was one of nine

regional development agencies in England.

It was charged by the Labour government with supporting business growth and encouraging investment, matching skills to employer needs, creating the conditions for economic growth, transport and communication infrastructure and promoting the region's 'outstanding quality of life'.

At its height, it employed 450 people and had a budget of over £1bn over three years – known as the single budget.

The NWDA was also responsible for directly influencing £1.2bn of other public and private sector investment into the region over three years.

Another role for the NWDA was management of the European Regional Development Fund in the north west – it had 755m Euros to spend until 2013 – and the Rural Development Programme for England in the north west, for which it has an allocated budget of £75m to 2013.

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