

# Local Industrial Strategy masterclass – developing a place narrative

Wednesday 3 April 2019

De Vere Colmore Gate, Birmingham

# Emergency procedures

Please familiarise yourself with the emergency evacuation procedures located within your handout.

# Introduction

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# Shaping a strong narrative for the place, Government and investors

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# LGA Workshop: Developing a Place Narrative

3 April 2019

Tony Smith

Policy Executive, Birmingham City Council  
Head of Strategic Policy, WMCA



West Midlands  
Combined Authority

**Delivering inclusive growth**

# Shaping a strong narrative for the place, government and investors

- Why is narrative so important?
- Key principles for narrative
- The West Midlands devolution story
  - **How we developed the narrative for the devo deal**
  - **Keeping the story up to date**
  - **Different Audiences**
- Lessons for other places



# Why is narrative so important?

- Human beings have been telling stories since we could talk
- Cultural story telling occurred in all ancient indigenous peoples
- It spreads morals and values, creates cultural norms and community identities and binds societies together
- We do it intuitively, by instinct
- This is why it matters so much in politics and policy



# Narrative – the key principles

- **Emotion**
- **Paint a picture – make us see in a new way**
- **Point towards a goal – make a promise (that we are going somewhere good)**
- **Build anticipation**
- **Deepen our understanding**
- **Short and sweet**
- **Genuine and real**
- **Don't be corny – you are not Churchill, Shakespeare or Lincoln...**





# Some examples of the power of narrative...

*“From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent.”*

*- Winston Churchill*



## Some examples...

*“This royal throne of kings, this sceptered isle,  
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,  
This other Eden, demi-paradise,  
This fortress built by Nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war,  
This happy breed of men, this little world,  
This precious stone set in the silver sea,  
Which serves it in the office of a wall  
Or as a moat defensive to a house,  
Against the envy of less happier lands,  
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.”*

*- William Shakespeare, Richard II*



## Some examples ...

*“Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal*

*...the nation, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”*

*- Abraham Lincoln*



# Narratives for pitching to government

- **Make an offer to government and the nation – not just an ask – partnership not begging bowl**
- **The story must explain why delivering the ask will allow the offer to be fulfilled**
- **Strong evidence is vital – be realistic and evidence both the opportunities and the challenges**
- **SWOT works well – but don't present it like that**
- **Make sure your narrative chimes with how government sees the world – not just priorities but political perspective**



# Once upon a Time in the West Midlands – developing our devolution narrative

- It started with the Statement of Intent (July 2015)
- The place: the geography and why it makes sense
- The opportunities and challenges
- Clear priorities and plans (joint SEP)
- The strength of our partnership and commitment to collaboration – LAs and LEPs
- Our understanding of how we will work together – all places will benefit but not at the same time or in the same way
- Our track record to date
- The evidence base



# The devolution deals (Autumn 2015 and 2017)

- **Building on the declaration of intent**
- **The place: A young, diverse Place; history – industrial revolution, decline, renaissance**
- **The offer: enhanced growth and closed fiscal gap**
- **Our commitment to collaboration and the strength of the partnerships put in place**
- **The opportunities in the West Midlands – advanced manufacturing, life sciences, HS2,**
- **The challenges: skills, transport, land remediation**
- **The powers and resources we needed**
- **Second deal: we submitted our own draft with narrative**
- **Evolution of the process – towards ongoing dialogue and a shared narrative**



# Keeping the story up to date

- **Strengths today – economic performance up since 2015**
- **New opportunities – CWG22, Coventry 2021**
- **Growing challenges – youth unemployment, homelessness, high streets, productivity**
- **Implementing Devo 2 and the Housing and Skills Deals**
- **Local Industrial Strategy - integrated plan for growth – skills, transport, HS2, housing**
- **High impact opportunities – metro, UK Central, smart mobility, health and life sciences, modern BPS, Creative industries, internationalisation**



# Speaking to different audiences

- **Treasury**
- **Other government departments**
- **Stakeholders within the CA “family”**
- **Wider regional community – businesses, sectors, civil society groups, the wider public**
- **Consistency of evidence and overall case**
- **Focus on the key interests of each audience**
- **Most of the public care about outcomes not process**
- **The West Midlands contains lots of smaller places with distinct narratives and interests – politicians need to look to both the strategic and the very local**





# Lessons

- **Devolution means taking responsibility and accepting risk**
- **Project a belief that the Place can rise to that challenge – based on the commitment of leaders, the track record and the heritage of the Place**
- **A vision of what the Place can achieve with more powers and resources**
- **Prove delivery capability and strength of commitment to partnership**
- **Share your narrative and make sure people buy into it**
- **The case for devolution needs to be very strong – working against decades of Whitehall assumptions**





# Thank you

# Shaping a strong narrative for the place, Government and investors

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and Head of Strategic Policy, West Midlands Combined  
Authority

**Jessica Bowles**, Director of Strategy, Bruntwood

**Mark Parkinson**, Economic Development and Planning  
Policy Manager, Staffordshire County Council

**Karen Ball**, Midlands Engine Investment Hub, Department  
for International Trade

**Refreshment break**

# The principles to shape a strong narrative

**Mike Emmerich**, Founding Director, Metro Dynamic

# Roundtable discussions

*Opportunity for critical friend support from facilitators and groups*

- What work have you done on LIS narrative?
- What challenges have you experienced in relation to developing a distinctive narrative?

# Final reflections

**Ben Lucas**, Managing Director, Metro Dynamics

**Lunch and networking**



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