



**MIDLANDS
ENGINE**

MIDLANDS ENGINE OBSERVATORY
Supporting our Partnership with
up-to-the-minute intelligence & insights

SEPTEMBER 2021

The Midlands Engine Observatory gathers data and intelligence, shapes policy insights and helps target investment for recovery and growth in our region. It is the only pan-regional Observatory in England.

Supported by academic researchers and leading economic and industry experts, the Observatory runs a programme of in-depth research projects, ensuring that our Partnership is kept fully informed with a growing, robust evidence base.

Foreword



**Rachael Greenwood,
Executive Director,
Midlands Engine**

Contemporary evidence of the challenges across our economy, the issues facing our businesses and the experiences of our communities underpins the work we deliver through the Midlands Engine Partnership.

National datasets can be valuable - the UK picture of economic performance and social impacts indicates trajectories. But our Partnership recognised the need to go further and understand the regional picture regarding the economy and communities of the Midlands Engine. To achieve this goal, in 2018 we set up our Observatory.

Early work carried out by our Observatory included an Independent Economic Review - the first of its type for our region. This huge undertaking drew on over 300 evidence sources and included the commissioning of dozens of individual study areas to address gaps in regional knowledge. The resulting body of work has set the focus and tempo for initial work delivered through our Partnership and these are the priorities which remain in focus today - as set out in this document.

The Midlands is the only region in England to have a **pan-regional Observatory**. It works to gather data, create intelligence, shape policy insights and help target investments for recovery and growth in every part of our region. It ensures we are evidence led, creating policy and activity based on regional data and bespoke regional research. Ultimately, it delivers data-led **analysis, helping in turn to drive tailored regional investment decisions and outcomes**. Our Observatory works to continue to grow and deepen the **evidence base** available to Government and partners, through which to understand the issues impacting the Midlands

economy. Daily intelligence briefings provide real-time intelligence and inform contemporary decision making, for instance, through roundtables and strategic debates.

Our **Partnership** across local authorities, universities, businesses and more allows us to access expertise and data from the entire region. An integrated part of the Midlands Engine Partnership, the Observatory comprises a **Research Partnership** of academic institutions to deliver the regional evidence, insights and analysis our partners and Government need. Our Observatory also brings together the Midlands Engine **Intelligence Community**, data owners and those interested in economic and wider data to share and disseminate latest intelligence and identify shared research opportunities. In concert, the Observatory Research Partnership and Intelligence Community provide a forum for universities and partners to come together to **steer research, collaborate on projects, and secure external funding** for research projects. The focus for the Observatory is to create impact through policy and strategy, both of which require the invaluable evidence provided by our partners.

The breadth and expertise of our Partnership is one of our strengths. The Observatory works to promote and disseminate the work of our region, and to co-ordinate, gap fill and commission research of value to partners and stakeholders. Over the last year, the Observatory has secured **£500,000 of co-investment** from university and other academic partners, against ten areas of primary research - research areas identified within the Independent Economic Review in 2019.

Our work continues to be underpinned by contemporary data and emerging evidence, as the role of our Observatory grows in breadth and significance; a critical driver in the evidence-led, pan-regional work we undertake, together.

REPORTS, INSIGHTS AND BRIEFINGS

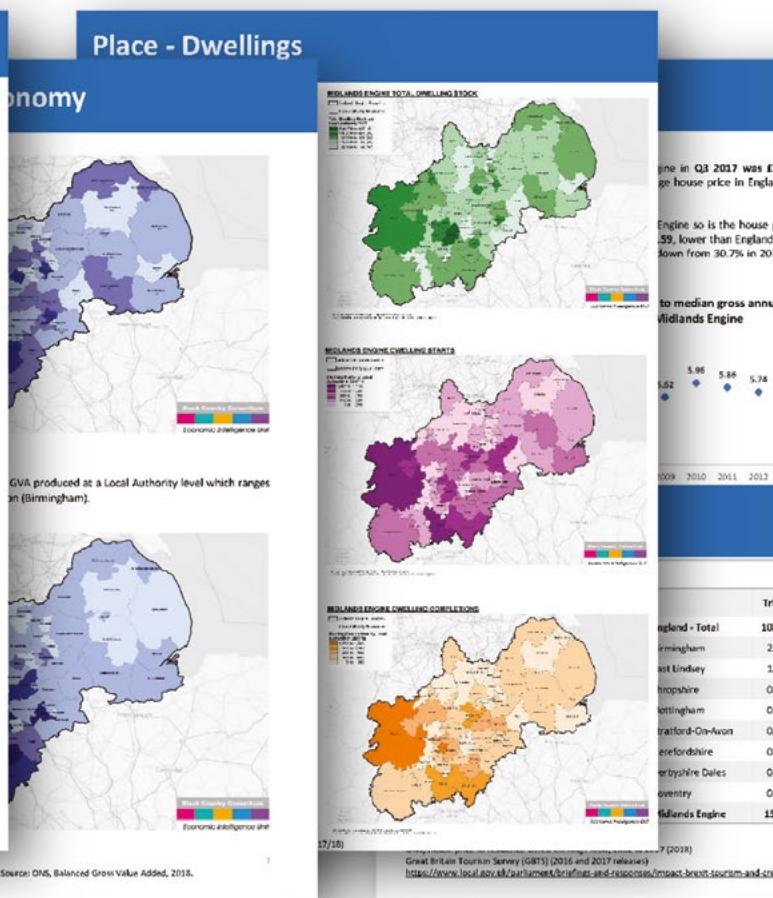
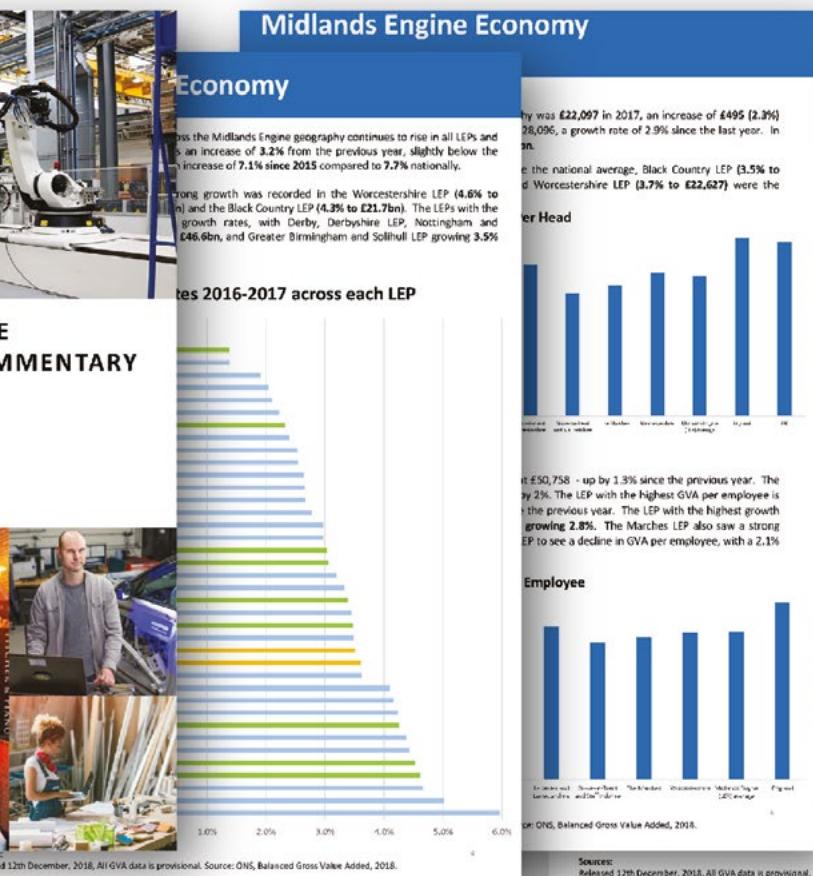
The Observatory team produces regular briefings on the latest data and its impact on our region. These briefings translate research into actionable insights which we publish in our ***Regional Economic Impact Monitor***, a monthly digest of our region's economy. Produced in partnership with the Black Country Consortium Economic Intelligence Unit, Nottingham Trent University and the University of Birmingham (City-REDI), our Monitors provide partners and Government with the reliable and timely information they need to power economic growth and recovery.

In April 2020, the Observatory published its ***Independent Economic Review (IER)***, the first of its kind for our region. The result of a detailed analysis of the entire Midlands economy and delivered by leading economists and academics, the IER features in-depth insights from leading regional businesses. The IER also provides the framework within which we have commissioned all our subsequent research. This foundational

research is reviewed annually, with updates published every autumn in our ***State of the Region Report***.

Over the last year the Observatory has secured £500,000 of co-investment from universities and other academic partners to pursue ten areas of primary research with top academics. Research we have commissioned so far includes:

- A **Systematic Review of our Region's supply chains** in partnership with Warwick Manufacturing Group.
 - Discontinuous Innovation in the Midlands Engine (DIME) in partnership with Loughborough University, focusing on the future of digital technologies.
 - A fully interactive economic dashboard from Oxford Economics which allows partners to estimate the impact of policy interventions on a range of economic and social factors.





QUARTERLY ECONOMIC BRIEFINGS

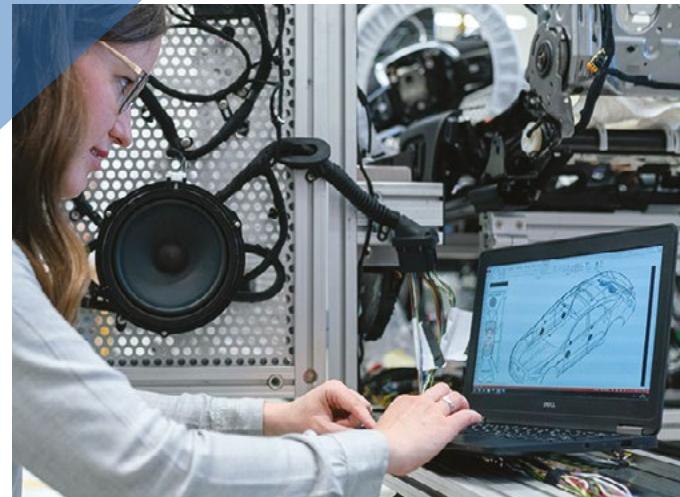
The Observatory holds Economic Briefings every quarter online - an opportunity to share and discuss the latest research and data from the Observatory and its partners.

INTELLIGENCE HUB

The **Midlands Engine Intelligence Hub** provides a single, interactive portal for all our Observatory intelligence: a wealth of up-to-the-minute pan-regional data, research and expert insights providing a unique tool to inform decision making around key investments and policy formulation for economic and social benefit in the Midlands.

Key features include live and interactive data and Power BI dashboards, spatial visualisations, intelligence briefings, insight pieces from regional experts and commissioned deep-dive research.





INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY

The Midlands Engine Intelligence Community (MEIC) is an open forum for organisations involved in gathering and disseminating economic intelligence in the Midlands.

The MEIC comprises policy professionals from local enterprise partnerships, local authorities and other regional institutions, all of which support our ongoing workstreams, share data and best practice, and receive regular updates on key research programmes.



RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

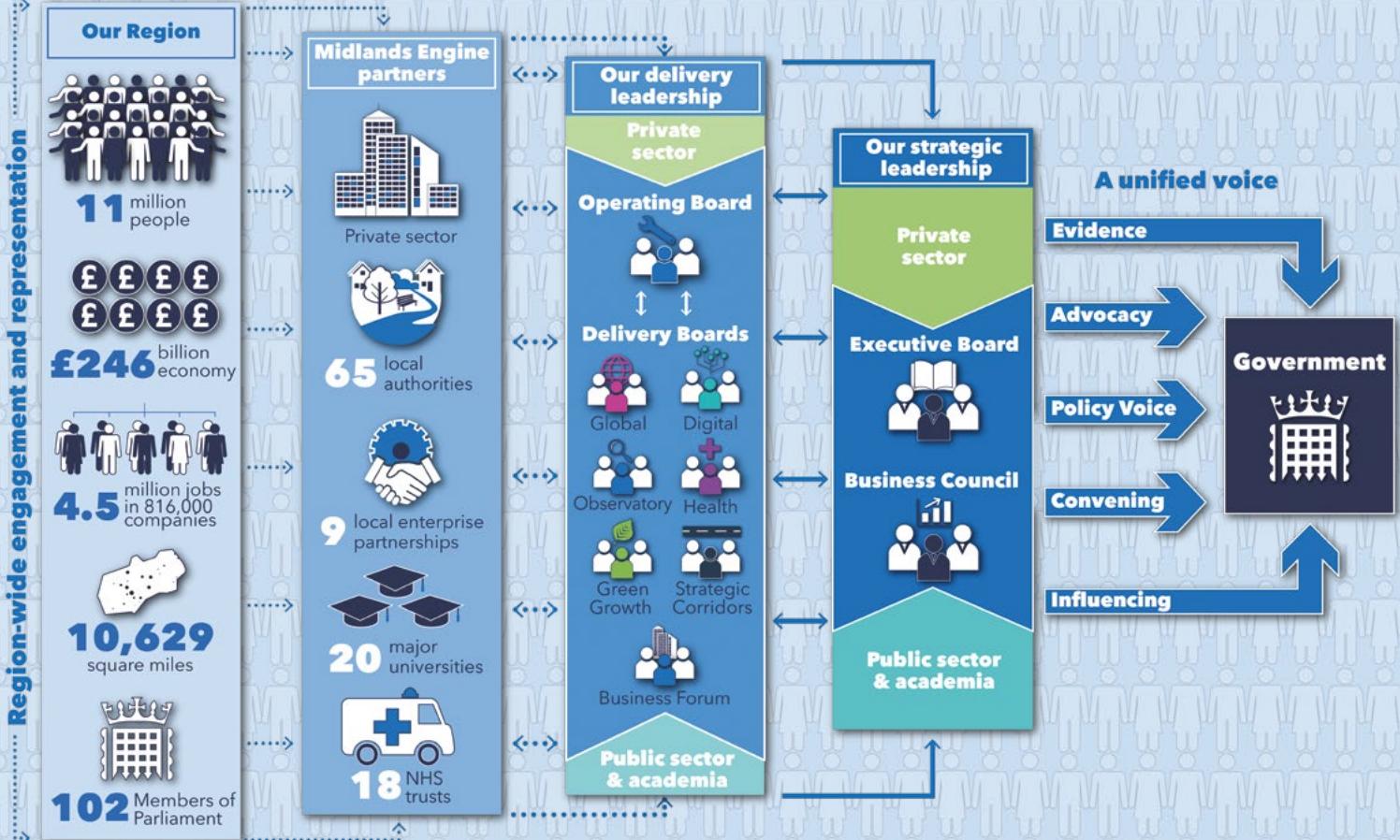
The Midlands Engine Research Partnership provides a forum for universities from across the Midlands to come together quarterly to collaborate, steer research, secure external funding for projects and contribute to key policy reviews and strategy formulation for the Midlands Engine.



MIDLANDS ENGINE

The Midlands Engine Observatory is an alliance of leading academic researchers, and economic and industry experts, working together to deliver the regionally focused research and analysis our partners need, for every part of the Midlands.





Our Partnership - The Midlands Engine is the largest regional economy in the UK outside London and the place that 11 million people call home. Our Midlands Engine Partnership spans the heart of the UK. Working at scale, we focus on adding value - tackling the things that really matter in our region to drive prosperity for our communities and businesses.

Our Impact - Together, we make sure the Midlands voice is heard and act as a positive agent for economic, social and environmental change, to benefit every single part of our region. We do this through shared intent, collaborative investment and a unified voice, direct to Government.

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The Midlands Engine is a coalition of Councils, Combined Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP), Universities and businesses across the region, actively working with Government to build a collective identity, to enable us to present the Midlands as a competitive and compelling offer that is attractive at home and overseas. Copyright © 2021 The Midlands Engine, All rights reserved.

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