

The Rt Hon. Alec Shelbrooke, M.P.
Conservative Member of Parliament for Elmet & Rothwell
Leader of the UK Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Councillor James Lewis
Leader of Leeds City Council
Labour Group Office
Civic Hall
Leeds
LS1 1UR

Tuesday 5th July 2022

Dear Councillor Lewis,

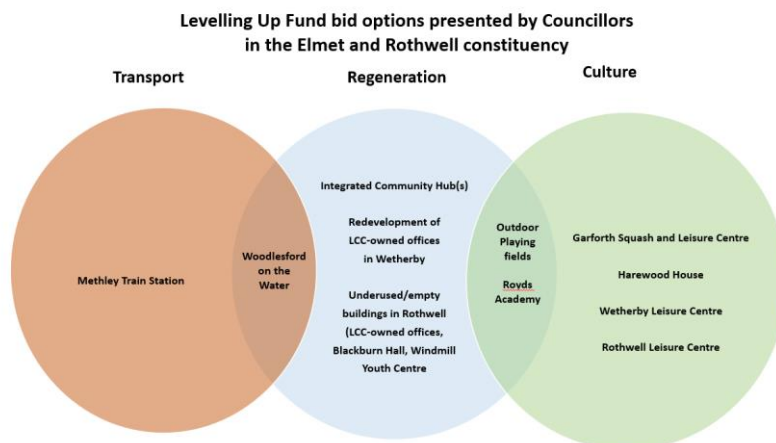
Levelling Up Fund Bid for Elmet & Rothwell

I am extremely disappointed with the lack of ambition in the Levelling Up Fund proposals Leeds City Council has developed for Elmet & Rothwell.

The Government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF) was designed to invest in infrastructure and support town centre and high street regeneration, local transport projects, and heritage assets.

For Elmet & Rothwell, you are proposing to install a handful of cycle paths, as well as resurfacing a few footpaths, planting some bulbs, and installing picnic tables in existing parks and green spaces managed by Leeds City Council. This is merely a plan to tart up existing assets, it's not a plan to unite and level up our communities. It's not good enough for my constituents.

I took the proactive decision on 12th November 2021 to bring together councillors in Elmet & Rothwell so we could work together on a cross-party basis to discuss ideas for levelling up projects. A summary of this discussion was submitted to Leeds City Council for further detailed assessments on 26th January 2022.



Proudly representing fellow residents in the Elmet & Rothwell constituency.

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I heard nothing more from you or your officers until 8th April 2022, despite chasing for updates. At this point I was informed that you were looking at a broader idea of “Green Routes”; not something directly proposed by councillors in our submission document. In subsequent conversations with your officers, I asked, on numerous occasions, what the economic impact of your “Green Routes” proposal would be, and I was led to believe that you were attempting to expand upon an idea to increase opportunities for economic development, leisure, and hospitality around the Aire & Calder Navigation. I asked for detailed information, including drawings and proposals for hospitality and leisure development before the proposal was discussed at your Executive Board on 22nd June 2022. No such information was provided to me.

I am therefore disappointed, following your Executive Board, to have received a series of drawings on 29th June 2022 detailing a scheme to merely tart up parks and green spaces you already manage. There is no ambition in these proposals. There is no major infrastructure plan, no town centre regeneration, and no plan for economic development creating jobs and growth.

Elsewhere in Leeds you have drafted bids for a new leisure centre in Gipton (Leeds East), improvements to Armley Town Street (Leeds West), and a new Park & Ride scheme in Alwoodley (Leeds North East). Meanwhile, the proposals for Elmet & Rothwell include, among other minor items, treating Himalayan balsam and planting wildflowers in existing parks and green spaces.

To add insult to injury, the Government’s Levelling Up Fund encourages bids for up to £20 million per constituency: a significant offer by this Government to unite and level up our communities after decades of neglect by successive governments. Yet, your proposed scheme for Elmet & Rothwell amounts to just £10 million. Not only does this proposal lack ambition, but it also short-changes my constituents, particularly those in former industrial areas.

Furthermore, despite repeated requests by me for public consultation on your proposals, there has been no attempt to consult with my constituents - the very people the Levelling Up Fund is meant to serve. My constituents in Elmet & Rothwell deserve better.

I urge you to return to the submission document attached, which I submitted to you on 26th January 2022, with ideas proposed by your fellow councillors. Our expectation was for investment in infrastructure, or for a new leisure centre and community hub. If you think a new leisure centre is good enough for the residents of Gipton, why is it not good enough for my constituents in Elmet & Rothwell?

I look forward to receiving revised proposals for a bid that will unite and level up our communities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alec Shelbrooke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

The Rt Hon. Alec Shelbrooke, M.P.

Cc: Garforth & Swillington Ward Councillors; Harewood Ward Councillors; Kippax & Methley Ward Councillors; Rothwell Ward Councillors; Wetherby Ward Councillors; Tom Riordan, CBE; Mr Adam Brannen.

Enc.