BIRMINGHAM
Population: 1,137,100

COVENTRY
Population: 360,100
Made its mark: Coventry-born Delia Derbyshire – the "unsung heroine of British electronic music" – wrote the iconic theme tune to Doctor Who.

DUDLEY
Population: 319,400
Made its mark: Dudley was one of the birthplaces of the Industrial Revolution thanks to its iron, coal and limestone industries.

SANDWELL
Population: 325,500
Made its mark: In the 1770s, the Scottish inventor James Watt built his first steam engine in Tipton, within the borough of Sandwell.

SOLIHULL
Population: 213,900
Made its mark: Opened in 1976, the Solihull-based NEC plays host to six million guests and 500 events every year.

WALSALL
Population: 281,300
Made its mark: The Walsall-based Launer London factory hand makes the Queen’s luxury handbags.

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON
Population: 259,900
Made its mark: The City of Wolverhampton was the first town to introduce automatic traffic lights in 1927.

WEST MIDLANDS

West Midlands
Growth Company
Foreword

This is such an exciting time for the West Midlands. Not only has the region become an increasingly desirable destination for tourists – with record numbers of domestic and international visitors last year – it is now very much in the spotlight as a thriving global location for major events.

While planning is well underway to ensure that the 2021 UK City of Culture in Coventry and the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham achieve a positive legacy for the region and its communities, there’s plenty to see and do today.

In addition to a packed 2019 events calendar, the West Midlands boasts a vibrant retail offer, Michelin starred restaurants and world-class cultural gems. It’s also an essential gateway to the heart of England and its countryside and waterways, and is a stone’s throw from the capital.

We invite you to come and join our ambassadors to help tell our story, capturing the spirit of a resurgent region, which is making its mark.

Neil Rami
Chief Executive,
West Midlands Growth Company
Welcome to the West Midlands!

As the West Midlands enters a once-in-a-generation opportunity to realise its ambitions and potential, we invite you to learn more about a dynamic, thriving and creative region, which has emerged from an industrious past and is forging a positive future.

This press pack tells the West Midlands’ story. It shines a spotlight on the people and places that are making their mark in the region to provide the content for your next feature, interview or broadcast.

Useful websites

West Midlands Growth Company
https://wmgrowth.com/
The West Midlands Growth Company helps create new jobs, build and expand businesses, attract regional investment and encourage tourism. Read about what we do and our latest news stories here.

West Midlands Toolkit https://wmgrowth.com/toolkit
For images, key facts, films and media requests, the West Midlands Growth Company Toolkit has everything you need to help tell the region’s story.

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The West Midlands’ 19 in 19

The West Midlands is a proven host of major global sporting events. 2019 is no different:

- **Gymnastics World Cup** (23 March, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham)
- **ICC Cricket World Cup** (30 May-14 July, five matches at Edgbaston Stadium) – including the **Trophy Tour** (15 March, Wolverhampton; 17 March, Coventry; 18-20 April, Birmingham)
- **The Nature Valley Classic tennis tournament** (15-23 June, Edgbaston Priory Club, Birmingham)
- **The Birmingham Grand Prix** athletics (18 August, Alexander Stadium, Birmingham)

A festival takes place nearly every weekend. The pick of this year’s offer includes:

- **Godiva Festival** (July, War Memorial Park, Coventry)
- **Mostly Jazz, Funk & Soul Festival** headlined by Burt Bacharach (12-14 July, Moseley Park)
- **International Festival of Glass** (23-26 August, Stourbridge Glass Quarter)
- **WV1 Fest** (24-25 August, West Park, Wolverhampton)
- **British Science Festival** (10-13 September, University of Warwick).

Among the notable milestones in 2019:

- **Series 5 of Birmingham-based Peaky Blinders** hits our screens
- New biopic of JRR Tolkien – **whose childhood in Birmingham** provided the inspiration behind Lord of the Rings – opens in cinemas in May
- Coventry marks its European City of Sport 2019 title with the opening of new, city centre-based water park **The Wave** (spring / summer)
- The **40th year of Coventry’s 2-Tone music**
- **Wolverhampton Grand** celebrates its 125th anniversary
- The revamp of Birmingham’s flagship **Centenary Square** will be completed
- National Trust’s **Roundhouse Birmingham** opens
- Coventry’s £20m development **Cathedral Lanes** adds new names
- The City of Wolverhampton continues a **£1bn city centre transformation**
- 11 new hotels (700 bedrooms) launch
The West Midlands is located at the centre of the country, meaning it is extremely well-connected to the UK and the world. Transport hubs in the region such as Birmingham New Street, Birmingham Airport, Birmingham Coach Station and Wolverhampton Interchange have all been revamped in recent years – or are currently undergoing redevelopment – to provide the best possible welcome for visitors and media alike.

Being at the heart of the UK, the region is the perfect base to explore further afield and uncover stories from neighbouring counties – including Staffordshire, Shropshire and also Shakespeare’s England.

The West Midlands sits firmly on the world stage as a destination to be seen. The region has a reputation for hosting important events at venues such as the NEC, Ricoh Arena and Edgbaston Stadium.

**HS2** will massively transform the West Midlands, providing travel to London in just 38 minutes from 2026.
The home of invention

Creation and innovation have always been part of the West Midlands' DNA.

From its role at the heart of the Industrial Revolution to the birthplace of William Shakespeare and the region that gave birth to the 'city of a thousand trades', the West Midlands' innovators, products and ideas have made their mark, leading the development of the modern world.

This ingenuity has given rise to a host of distinctive visitor attractions across the region, including the open-air Black Country Living Museum, which tells the story of the world's first industrial landscape. It’s also a filming backdrop for Peaky Blinders.

Once the trailblazing arteries of the Industrial Revolution, the region is home to more than 300 miles of canals.

Birmingham’s Jewellery Quarter produces 40% of the nation’s bling – a real workshop of the world.

The birthplace of the motor industry, Coventry’s rich automotive heritage is detailed in the city’s most visited attraction, the Coventry Transport Museum.

Oxygen, pens, lawn tennis and heavy metal music were all founded in the West Midlands

The West Midlands’ famous brands include Cadbury, Marston’s and Codemasters
Young - and diverse - at heart

As one of the most diverse regions in the UK – with Birmingham’s population the youngest of all major European cities – the West Midlands' global, outward-looking communities have lots of stories to tell.

More people who leave London come to Birmingham than anywhere else in the UK.

The 2019 Mercer Quality of Living Survey also put Birmingham among the top 50 best global cities in which to live, ahead of Rome, Dubai and Hong Kong.

More than three quarters of the West Midlands is rural. Its waterways are popular for recreational activities.

There is lots to keep you entertained. From watching a play in Shakespeare’s birthplace or a concert at Birmingham’s Symphony Hall to eating in Michelin-starred restaurants and visiting family attractions like Dudley Zoo and Castle. The West Midlands hosts the UK’s biggest St Patrick’s Day Parade and two-day Pride festival.

Coventry has been announced as the UK City of Culture for 2021 and Birmingham will host the 2022 Commonwealth Games, further propelling the region into the spotlight.

The City of Wolverhampton was named in the top 3 best places to raise a family by the 2018 Family Living Index

47% of Birmingham and Coventry’s population is under the age of 30

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WEST MIDLANDS
Deeds mean more than words

In the West Midlands, we put people at the heart of what we do. Today, the region’s next generation of achievers are starting to create headlines.

Walsall-born singer Jorja Smith is on the cusp of superstardom, winning Best British Female Solo Artist at the 2019 Brit Awards. Birmingham poet Amerah Saleh shot to fame at the 2018 Commonwealth Games handover ceremony. Bournville’s Felicity Jones is an Oscar-nominated actress.

In the sporting arena, boxer Galal Yafai will fight for gold at his home Commonwealth Games in 2022, while Coventry Paralympian Kare Adenegan won the 2018 BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year.

Black Country animator Drew Roper and Indian-origin chef Rosie Ginday are among the entrepreneurs who have converted potential into success. Leo Kattou wowed judges on BBC’s MasterChef.

People who want to make a difference see the West Midlands as the place to achieve their goals. The region’s universities help them challenge the status quo, igniting ideas.

The region’s universities educate 160,000 students each year, producing more than 55,000 graduates.

Birmingham City University’s £57m Royal Birmingham Conservatoire trains the performers of the future.

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Get in touch

If you would like further information about the West Midlands region, don’t hesitate to contact us on the details below:

The West Midlands Growth Company communications team can assist with requests for statistics, images, videos, media visits, filming enquiries and bespoke itineraries

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Find out more at wmgrowth.com