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Yorkshire Universities unite to help region's economic recovery

West Yorkshire's seven higher education institutions are among the Yorkshire's universities to have signed up to an eight-point pledge of action to help the region deal with the effects of the economic downturn.

The Vice-Chancellors of the universities that comprise the association 'Yorkshire Universities' signed up to the pledge with the backing of the Minister for Yorkshire and Humber, Rosie Winterton. In West Yorkshire, the Pledge covers Leeds University, Leeds Met, Trinity & All Saints, Leeds College of Music, Northern School of Contemporary Dance, Bradford University, and Huddersfield University.

The signing took place during a visit by Rosie Winterton to the University of Huddersfield hosted by Yorkshire Universities' chairman, Professor Bob Cryan, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Huddersfield.

The region's higher education institutions have over 200,000 students and a combined turnover of over £1,429 billion. As a percentage of the regional gross domestic product, the higher education sector is the largest such sector in any region outside London. It is estimated that, both directly and indirectly, the sector generates £2.8 billion of output in the regional economy as employers, employment generators, importers of students, business creation and providers of knowledge and skills.

The concept of the Pledge promises that the universities will work together to alleviate some of the hardships caused by the economic downturn, and prepare the region for the upturn when it comes.

Regional Minister Rosie Winterton said: "I very much welcome the fact that all our higher educational bodies from across Yorkshire & the Humber have signed up to this economic pledge. The combined economic power of Yorkshire Universities is of enormous benefit to this region and their commitment to the pledge, alongside that of local authorities and emergency services, should not be under-estimated.

“There has never been a more important time for public sector organisations to take all measures at their disposal to help their local communities. Local and timely action can be of major help to residents and business communities in dealing with the impact of the economic downturn.”

Professor Bob Cryan said: “As large employers of over 33,000 staff, who make a significant contribution to our local economy, it is clear that we can assist businesses in meeting the challenges this recession brings. This is not only through continuing, and where possible, bringing forward building and maintenance projects, but also offering our expertise to help businesses take advantage of all possible opportunities, and to emerge from the recession ready to grow again.”

The Pledge states that, wherever possible...

1. We will pay promptly.
2. We will use procurement to ensure we benefit the local economy where we can.
3. We will support local business to get good information on contacts and opportunities with the universities and higher education colleges.
4. We will support local business to get good information on business support opportunities provided by Business Link and Yorkshire Forward link.
5. We will notify university vacancies to Job Centre Plus to ensure people who lose their jobs can be made aware of opportunities with the universities.
6. We will, finances permitting, bring forward refurbishment and maintenance work to help keep businesses going in the downturn.
7. We will ensure we work to build and promote the skills of our citizens so they are ready to exploit employment opportunities.
8. We will work to develop the local economy in preparation to take up future economic opportunities.

End