

Mark celebrates green light for LEP

A boundary-pushing project supported by the city's MPs has been given the go ahead.

Iain Stewart and Mark Lancaster welcomed the announcement approving the formation of a South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

The LEP puts Milton Keynes at the heart of a union which draws together the business expertise from across Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire and Hertfordshire.

Mr Stewart, who intervened during business secretary Vince Cable's announcement in the Commons, said afterwards: "I am delighted that the Government has given the go-ahead today for the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership, which has Milton Keynes at its heart.

"This is a much more logical grouping for Milton Keynes than the artificial boundaries of the South East of England and, with business in the driving seat, will help the area's economic development and lead to more jobs and investment.

"I am glad that Milton Keynes Council has been working closely with the local business community to drive this proposal."

Mr Lancaster added: "The beginning of the LEP truly signals a move towards business-led economic growth. By bridging the gap between the public and private sectors, this LEP is essential to our recovery from the financial collapse, and securing future prosperity. I am also particularly interested in our LEP's emphasis on apprenticeships and intend to do everything I can to support it."

The move came about after artificial boundaries imposed by the Labour government, which created the much-criticised Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), were scrapped.

Today (Thursday), 24 LEPs were announced by Dr Cable following 56 applications from across the country.

Formed by councils and business groups and supported by a raft of organisations, LEP structures should be in place by April 2011.