

People & Places Board – report from Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE (Chairman)

The future of rural England

1. The People and Places Board's **Post-Brexit England Commission** published its [final report](#) on the future of non-metropolitan England at LGA Annual Conference 2019. It provides an in depth focus on the role councils in rural and coastal areas can play: growing more productive and inclusive economies, shaping future investment in rural areas; and creating better connected places.
2. The report was launched at a plenary panel, Chaired by myself, on the future of local leadership: “Leading people: leading places”. The session explored how the future role of local leadership can deliver local growth and support productive and vibrant communities. Its panel included local government leaders, research partners, and Chairman of the Association of Local Authorities in Iceland. The plenary was well attended, and officers received excellent feedback from delegates.

Trade and Investment

3. In partnership with the City Regions Board and the Department of International Trade the LGA has produced a report on how local authorities can successfully attract investment, from both domestic and foreign sources, into local capital projects. This is in the final stages of design and will be available on the LGA website in early July.

Rural Digital Connectivity

4. Fast and reliable connectivity is widely considered as “the fourth utility” on a par with water and electricity. In line with the LGA's series of councillor handbooks, a guide has been produced for councillors who want to expand their technical and policy knowledge of digital connectivity and infrastructure. It provides a range of case studies outlining how councillors have played an instrumental role within their communities advocating for better connectivity to be provided to their residents. This will be available on the LGA website by the end of July.

Local Industrial Strategy

5. Working closely with the City Regions Board and the Cities and Local Growth Unit, the LGA commissioned a comprehensive improvement support offer to councils looking to instigate or further their contribution to Local Industrial Strategy development. Two reports capturing the learning from this offer [have now been published](#) and focus on the key components of LIS development and the role of councils in contributing to this process.

Skills and Employment

6. The LGA launched [Work Local – Making our vision a reality](#) at its Annual Conference in July 2019, in partnership with the City Regions Board. It recommends that the Government commits to enabling groups of councils and combined authorities to work

with partners to test a devolved and integrated approach to employment and skills through local pathfinders to better address the unique skills and labour market challenges faced by local areas. It also sets out key findings from the LGA skills taskforce which brought together industry experts and stakeholders. The report was launched at a Conference plenary session on addressing the country's skills challenges.

Devolution Support

7. In partnership with the City Regions Board, the LGA has continued to facilitate the sharing of learning between combined authorities. During the reporting period, the LGA were represented at a CA CEX roundtable organised by MHCLG on the future role of cities in economic growth and we also convened meetings of the CA CEX Network and the CA Finance Directors Network.

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