

Economy and Transport Board – report from Cllr Peter Box CBE (Chair)

Local Growth Campaign

1. We have reached the end of our series of Town Hall debates which were the centrepiece of the LGA's Local Growth Campaign.
2. We started in London in November and after meetings with councillors across the country, we held the last of our events at Teignbridge District Council in Devon. We concentrated on growth in rural areas and I would like to thank Board Deputy-Chair, Cllr Mike Haines and council staff for a good evening's debate. It is very clear that there are particular economic issues which are unique to the South West - for example, an aging population and the future of EU "Objective 1" funding. Again the evidence is that to drive growth, local councils and their partners need customised economic levers that cannot be created as a one size fits all in Whitehall.
3. From our Town Hall debates, we intended to present our own Green Paper on Local Growth at the LGA conference. However, the work of councils and their partners at the local level has shown that we need more than a policy statement which is the usual content of a Government Green Paper. Our conference paper will now be a call to action for councils, Government and our partners. We will set out how councils have grasped devolution and driven new local strategies, we will identify the continued local barriers to growth and we will set out the renewed civic leadership that is required to stimulate the national economy.

Hidden Talents

4. The Hidden Talents report sets out a persuasive and well supported case for joining-up services around the most disengaged young people, and the need for local partnerships to be empowered to do this – but we need to do more to persuade Government Ministers and officials.
5. On 15 May we launched the next stage of our Hidden Talents work, which aims to build a more thorough evidential case for change with local authorities. The work was kicked off at a roundtable with the Rt Hon David Miliband MP, chair of the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO) Commission into Youth Unemployment, John Hayes MP Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, and a range of senior local government figures and partners.

6. Up and down the country councils are implementing innovative approaches that impact on the lives of young people, joining-up services to deliver better value for money. We will be working with a range of local authorities to capture this activity, and developing a single programme that builds a deeper evidence case for public-service reform that can better enable it. Government will be engaged in this work throughout.
7. We are looking for more councils to engage in this effort, to get involved please contact the team: hiddentalents@local.gov.uk.

Transport - Streetworks

8. One issue that became a hot topic at the last Board was streetworks. We have received many complaints from councils that badly managed streetworks by utility companies are causing concern amongst businesses and residents alike. As a Board, we have decided to look at this issue in depth and to ensure that there is a robust response from the LGA. If you have any concerns about poorly managed streetworks in your area, I would be pleased if you could send me the details.

Transport – Office of Rail Regulation

9. The Board's Group Leaders and I met officials from the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) in May. We raised the fact that there was inadequate consultation with councils and LEPs regarding future rail infrastructure investment. As a result, ORR has asked for a note from us to provide advice on how councils can be consulted more effectively on future rail investment. From this advice, ORR will be advising Network Rail on how it expects consultation with councils to be improved.

LGA Conference – local growth events

10. There are a number of exciting events taking place at the LGA annual conference on local growth, which I would welcome and encourage members to attend. The highlight will be the launch of the Local Growth Campaign paper with John Cridland, Director General, Confederation of British Industry (CBI) on Wednesday 27 June at 15.30 in the Main Hall. I hope members can attend and offer into the debate and Q+As the great work that councils are doing to drive growth.

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