

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

Work Programme

1. The primary objective of the People and Places Board remains the devolution of power and resources to local government across England, with a specific focus on non-metropolitan England.
2. Recognising that few members of the Board are likely to be actively engaged in delivering devolution deals and the importance of maintaining a focus on issues specific to non-metropolitan and rural areas it has been agreed that the work programme will include a specific focus on those issues of greatest relevance to rural and coastal communities.
3. Reflecting the national context, the composition of the Board and its particular place-based focus it has therefore been agreed that the 2018/19 work programme will have three components:
 - 3.1. **Pushing for devolution now** – advocating for devolution through national Government's local growth agenda i.e. the place-based elements of the Industrial Strategy and on a Department-by-Department basis, such as devolution of skills and employment support, and sub-national trade and investment reform;
 - 3.2. **Building the case for future devolution** – using the Post-Brexit England Commission as a platform to advance a refreshed case for devolution to non-metropolitan areas, re-positioning councils as a key partner with Government in shaping and supporting a successful post-Brexit England; and
 - 3.3. **Strengthening non-metropolitan economic resilience** – pushing for parity of treatment in Government policy and investment across all parts of England, with a targeted focus on issues of particular priority, reflecting the extent of the Board's wider work-programme, such as digital connectivity and the opportunity to explore the role of councils in rural land management, alongside reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

Post Brexit England Commission

4. Since its launch in February 2018, the People and Places Board's Post-Brexit England Commission has built a broad coalition of partners from across local government, Parliament, business and the public and housing sectors. In May, it began a series of roadshows across the country to gather evidence on the challenges rural and coastal communities are facing, and the local policy levers needed to tackle them.
5. At the LGA Annual Conference in July 2018, the Commission published an interim report detailing its findings to date. [‘The Future of Non-Metropolitan England: moving the conversation on’](#) outlines the ‘perfect storm’ of social and demographic challenges facing rural and coastal communities and identifies seven key challenges which local government can address if given the requisite powers and funding.

6. The report received a high level of attention from delegates and secured extensive positive coverage in the national media including [the Daily Telegraph](#), [the Guardian](#), [The Times](#) and [the Express](#). Cllr Hawthorne was also interviewed by Sky News Radio, which supplies news to every commercial radio station in the UK.
7. Having already held events in the South West, East Midlands, West Midlands and North West, the Commission's remaining roadshows are as follows and members can register their attendance on the LGA website – www.local.gov.uk/events.

East of England	Tuesday 27 November, Essex County Council
South East	Tuesday 18 December, LGA, Smith Square
Yorkshire and Humber	Tuesday 15 January, Railway Museum, York
North East	Tuesday 5 February, Radisson Blu, Durham

8. The Commission's interim report is the first major milestone in its programme of work. Its publication, and the attention it has received to date, provides a firm foundation on which to develop the next phase of the Commission's activity which will culminate in the publication of a final report in 2019.

Industrial Strategy

9. The People and Places Board has continued to represent the interests of non-metropolitan areas in relation to the key place-based elements of the Industrial Strategy, specifically the Government's Review of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), the introduction of Local Industrial Strategies and the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).
10. The most pressing issues for the Board relate to the implementation of the LEP Review following the publication of its conclusions in July. Specifically, Members have raised particular concerns regarding the Government's position on future LEP geographies as well as how council oversight and democratic accountability will be preserved following implementation of the review's recommendations. I have written with the Chair of the City Regions Board to the BEIS Secretary of State seeking urgent clarity on these matters.
11. The LGA and the LEP Network separately wrote to the BEIS Secretary of State in June calling for the Government to agree Local Industrial Strategies with all areas of England and an announcement was made to confirm this by the Government in July. We will continue to explore opportunities for joint work with the LEP Network, with a particular focus on the upcoming UKSPF consultation.

Rural Digital Connectivity Working Group

12. The Rural Digital Connectivity Working Group has refreshed its membership and will meet next month to agree its new programme of work. The Group plans to invite Openreach to their first meeting to discuss how the communications provider and local government can work together to ensure new builds are connected to future-proofed fibre broadband.

18 October 2018

Skills and Employment – Work Local

13. The City Regions and People and Places Boards continue to push forward the LGA's Work Local proposals for skills and employment devolution to Government, Opposition and key stakeholders.
14. As part of this, we have established a new Skills Taskforce made up of LGA Board members which will aim to engage a range of stakeholders during a series of roundtables. Our aim is to build relationships with external organisations around the skills and employability agenda.
15. Following on from positive discussions in the summer with the Rt Hon Anne Milton MP, Skills and Apprenticeships Minister, we are also continuing to pursue a strategic DfE/LGA political and operational partnership on post 16 skills to benefit both devolved and non-devolved areas. This is in progress with Whitehall officials.

Trade and investment

16. As Britain prepares to leave the EU, we will be working in partnership with the City Regions Board to inform the LGA's policy work on trade and international investment. This will entail engaging with Whitehall to strengthen the sub-national trade and investment landscape, developing an evidence base of local priorities for national trade deals and agreeing with Government how the views and experience of local government can feed into the process of agreeing trade deals.
17. To inform this activity, a survey of the LGA's membership has been undertaken to highlight the depth and diversity of trade and other international links established between councils and global partners, with a view to strengthening the role of sub-national government in future trade and investment activity.
18. In addition to this, the LGA is undertaking a piece of improvement work to outline the role councils can play in attracting foreign capital investment. It will capture sectoral best practice and develop a set of resources to support councils and their private sector partners to maximise foreign capital investment opportunities and consider how to develop a longer-term pipeline of projects to meet a range of international investor needs.

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