

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

Post Brexit England Commission

1. The Post-Brexit England Commission, established to explore the issues and opportunities facing local areas outside England's major city regions, held its seventh and final engagement roadshow in February.
2. The Commission has now visited all English regions outside London and heard from over 200 non-metropolitan stakeholders on the opportunities and challenges their rural areas are facing, post-Brexit.
3. External research has also been commissioned to identify the opportunities for local government to play an enhanced role in the reformed land management policy framework, and transitional and post-2024 successor arrangements to Pillar I of the Common Agricultural Policy.
4. Evidence from this research, as well as the engagement roadshows, will feed into the Commission's final report which will launch at LGA Annual Conference 2019.

Industrial Strategy

5. Having secured a commitment from Government that all areas will agree a Local Industrial Strategy, the LGA have commissioned an improvement support offer focused on Local Industrial Strategies (LIS).
6. Over the coming weeks, the delivery of this offer will include the hosting of LIS masterclass sessions focusing on inclusive growth, collaboration with business and developing a place narrative. The People and Places Board have contributed views on how this offer can best support councils from non-metropolitan areas to engage with LIS development.
7. At the time of writing, no Government announcements had been made on either the geography changes arising from the LEP Review or the national consultation on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The Board will continue to closely monitor developments in these policy areas and will respond on behalf of non-metropolitan councils as appropriate.

Rural Digital Connectivity Working Group

8. The Rural Digital Connectivity Working Group oversaw the LGA's response to an Ofcom consultation on the delivery of the broadband universal service obligation (USO). In the submission the LGA outlined the need for Ofcom to ensure that broadband providers implement a social tariff to ensure no resident experiences hardship paying the market rate for a broadband connection.
9. The Working Group recently invited a senior executive from Openreach to their meeting to discuss the USO in greater detail. In conversations with the provider it became clear that until Ofcom has fully examined the responses to its recent consultation there will remain a lack of clarity on how or when the USO will be implemented.

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10. People and Places Board Chairman Cllr Mark Hawthorne was invited to a mobile connectivity roundtable hosted by consumer organisation Which? and attended by a range of business, rural and consumer stakeholders. There was consensus across the room for the Government and Ofcom to consider regulatory measures such as rural roaming (where a mobile can utilise the strongest signal from any mobile network operator) to incentivise the market to provide excellent coverage in rural areas. The LGA will continue to have conversations with stakeholders with an aim to join up on our lobbying efforts.

Skills and Employment

11. Last year the City Regions and People and Places Boards established an '**LGA skills taskforce**' in recognition that we need to do more to engage stakeholders and industry experts on our [Work Local ambitions for a place based approach to employment and skills](#). To do this, the co-chairs, Cllrs Sir Richard Leese and Mark Hawthorne, are convening three themed roundtables. The second roundtable **Careers and Retraining for a changing local economy** took place in February 2019, bringing together leading councillors and industry representatives. It was both a wide ranging and extremely positive discussion about how the current system around careers advice, apprenticeships and adult learning could be improved. Click [here for more information about the Taskforce and the roundtables](#).

Trade and investment

12. As the UK prepares to leave the EU, we have continued to work in partnership with the City Regions Board to inform the LGA's policy work on trade and inward investment.
13. In January, the People and Places Board inputted to the proposed aims that will be used to frame the LGA's policy engagement on trade and investment over the coming year.
14. The Board also agreed the LGA's next steps to advance these objectives, which sought to build on the recent recommendations of the International Trade Committee¹ and included an agreement to invite a senior representative from the Department for International Trade to the next Board in March.

Devolution

15. A commitment to develop a common devolution framework – interpreted as a mechanism to access local devolution in England outside of the Mayoral Combined Authorities governance model - was contained in the Conservative manifesto.
16. The Devolution Framework was expected to be published before Christmas. The People and Places Board agreed to write to the Secretary of State to influence the Devolution Framework before it has been finalised with some key asks for the sector that were felt were the most pressing priorities for the sector. It was also clear to ask for parity for those non-metropolitan areas that hadn't been afforded the same freedoms as areas with a devolution deal.

¹ The Committee recommended that local government 'should have a voice in all aspects of the trade policy process'. Their full report on UK trade policy transparency and scrutiny is available [here](#).

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17. The Devolution Framework has still not been published and there is currently no revised publication date.

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