

## **People & Places Board – report from Cllr Kevin Bentley (Chairman)**

### **Devolution**

1. Making a strong case for more devolution outside of urban areas has been a key focus for the People and Places Board since its inception. Devolution to non-metropolitan areas will remain a central focus for the Board over the coming year, as reflected in the Board's work programme agreed in September.<sup>1</sup>
2. The Board will continue to advance the views and priorities of non-metropolitan England to shape the national devolution debate and influence government policy development. In particular, the Board will seek to provide a strong voice for non-metropolitan England in supporting the LGA's wider work on the government's devolution white paper, announced in the Queen's Speech.
3. Key activity in support of this will include:
  - 3.1. Pursuing a programme of Parliamentary activity, including through select committee evidence and the APPG on reform, decentralisation and devolution, for which the LGA is the secretariat. The APPG held its first meeting of the current cycle in July, which focused on the future of non-metropolitan England.
  - 3.2. Commissioning research that will seek to explore how greater control of financial and fiscal levers might operate in non-metropolitan England. Localis have been appointed to deliver this research and will be presenting at the next Board.
  - 3.3. Working with the City Regions Board to steer the LGA's wider devolution policy development and campaigning activity.

### **Digital connectivity**

4. Louise Lancaster, Joint Head of the Barrier Busting Task Force in the DCMS Digital Infrastructure team presented to the Board on the Government's consultation to reform planning regulation to support the deployment of 5G and extend mobile coverage. At the time of writing, a formal submission to the consultation is with the Board for clearance.
5. The LGA has launched [a councillor's guide to digital connectivity](#). The guide, drafted in consultation with mobile network operators and broadband providers, explores how councillors can help better connect local areas and includes hints, tips and case studies from those who have undertaken work to help improve their communities' connectivity.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://lga.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g4258/Public%20reports%20pack%2011th-Sep-2019%2011.00%20People%20Places%20Board.pdf?T=10>

### **Rural Land Management**

6. The findings of the Board's research on councils' role in the future of rural land management have provided an excellent platform on which to engage Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The LGA is now a member of several DEFRA land management policy sounding groups and will feedback progress to the Board.

### **Employment and skills**

7. The Board will work with the City Regions Board to take forward the LGA's lobbying work on skills and employment over the coming board cycle. This will include an enhanced policy focus on youth participation, an issue that was discussed by the Board in September.
8. To shine a light on the importance of good careers, advice and guidance and make a case for improvements to the system, the LGA issued a [press release](#) ahead of the GCSE results day in August. This also coincided with NEET quarterly data release showing a spike in figures, which gained some traction from national press.

### **Local growth**

9. Over the coming year, the Board will continue to seek to ensure the key elements of Government's national economic strategy – Local Industrial Strategies, UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the LEP Review, fit with the priorities and ambitions of non-metropolitan authorities and that councils are well placed to support sustainable and inclusive growth. An MHCLG official has been invited to the next meeting of the Board to discuss the Stronger Towns Fund and its application to towns in non-metropolitan areas.

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