

City Regions Board- report from Sir Richard Leese CBE (Chair)

Ongoing Projects

1. Work continues on research projects commissioned on behalf of the Board, including research into the role of councils in delivering the Sustainable Development Goals, which will be launched at an online event on the 17 July, and the lessons learned from established sub-national bodies, such as the Northern Powerhouse and the Midlands Engine, which was discussed at the June board and will be used to influence the forthcoming devolution white paper.
2. Research by IPPR North on the work undertaken by councils to drive inclusive growth across local areas (pre-covid) has now been completed and takes account of emerging responses to recovery. The report was launched at an online event on 24 June and shared with councils to inform their work in this area going forward.
3. The LGA has continued to engage as appropriate with public affairs work and government consultations relating to the Board's priorities, including the Government's freeports consultation and the MHCLG Select Committee inquiry into the progress of devolution in England.
4. Work to explore the particular cost pressures facing urban councils has continued, emerging findings were discussed with lead members in May, a presentation was given to the Board in June and following member feedback the final report is on course for completion by the end of July

Employment and Skills

5. We continue to engage our member authorities to shape our views and policy around the COVID-19 crisis and what is needed for the jobs and skills recovery. Most recently, officers discussed recovery issues with the Combined Authority Employment and Skills Network (3 June), and organised a roundtable between local authorities from non-devolved areas with DfE, DWP and MHCLG officials (4 June). The City Regions Board, People and Places and the Children and Young People Board all discussed a jobs and skills recovery paper at their June meetings. The latest LGA position can be viewed [here](#). To note, a DWP official presented the Government thoughts on employment support at the City Regions meeting.
6. A range of commissioned reports were also discussed and approved by the Board. These included a report from Shared Intelligence summarising the outputs from a project we commissioned them to carry out to support eight local and combined authorities to work with local partners to address skills and employability challenges and opportunities. Findings from the report will now be available on the LGA website shortly. The Board also approved a case study report on the evolving combined authority skills and employment

commissioning role. It contains detailed case studies, lessons learned from devolution and recommendations for the future. The content will be available on our website shortly.

7. The Board also commissioned Ecuity, to provide new analysis on projected low carbon jobs by local authority and by sector. The analysis revealed that in total there could be 700,000 jobs generated by 2030 and 1.18 million by 2050. LG Inform shows the data by local authority. This analysis has been useful to the sector and many have used it for their recovery plans. Our [green jobs web hub](#) hosts all the information in one place. It was launched on 11 June. Media interest has been high. There were 96 national and local media references. The LGA wrote to all relevant Select Committee Chairs, Government and Shadow Ministers and Secretaries of State, with some resulting in meetings (Luke Pollard MP, shadow environment secretary).
8. On the 7 July the LGA and Connect organised a Devolution APPG session on skills and jobs. Key issues discussed were green jobs analysis (above), LGA's Work Local proposals, jobs and skills recovery, and the brilliant work of the local government sector. Cllr Kevin Bentley (People and Places Boards) and Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe (City Regions Board) spoke at the session with case studies from Blackpool, Greater Manchester (Cllr Sean Fielding), Portsmouth and Staffordshire. All Board Members were invited to join the call.
9. Cllr Abi Brown will be representing the LGA on a Getting Britain Back to Work panel session at the Learning and Work Institute's employment and skills convention on 9 July, speaking alongside Lord Jim O'Neill, the Resolution Foundation and the Association of College. Ministers from DfE (Gillian Keegan) and DWP (Mims Davies) will also speak.
10. Officers continue to engage with a range of stakeholders to progress the localist agenda on recovery, including the Institute for Employment Studies and Learning and Work, and focusing on older workers through the Centre for Better Ageing.
11. Young people's training and employment prospects are expected to be disproportionately affected by the economic fallout of the COVID-19 crisis. We therefore continue to focus on our improving youth participation work. Engagement with member authorities and stakeholders have continued to shape our views and emerging policy ahead of expected Government announcements on the Opportunity Guarantee for young people. We have been working closely with the LGA Workforce team, as many of the measures around apprenticeships, traineeships and T levels will involve the sector workforce.
12. Lead Members discussed LGA representation on the Youth Employment Group, set up in response to the COVID-19 crisis, to work with stakeholders to improve the offer for young people. The sector views for a local offer are continuing to be fed into the Group.
13. The Improving youth participation report, culminating our engagement work with the sector and stakeholders, is being finalised. This will now be reviewed with the impact of Covid-19 crisis on young people. The report will set out our recommendations to

Government on improving the education, training and employment offer for the next generation.

EU Funding

14. The LGA sought intelligence from local and combined authorities on how current European Structural and Investment Fund activity has been impacted by COVID-19. This includes looking at ways to reduce the burdens on current project beneficiaries, so they can concentrate on COVID issues and be assured that their running costs will be continued to be met, as far as possible. We also sought ideas from member authorities on how current projects can be redirected and pivoted to COVID related activity, and what could be done with remaining funds to support those businesses and residents most in need within the ESIF framework.
15. We submitted a summary of the intelligence and ideas gathered to the Performance and Dispute Resolution National Sub-Committee. This has informed central government assurance that has been published.
16. £51 million of ERDF Reserve Fund monies has been secured to support councils implement social distancing measures for local high streets. The remaining parts of the ERDF Reserve Fund will be to support SMEs, including the Kickstart Tourism Package.
17. The LGA continues to raise concerns about DWP not fully utilising the ESF programme before we leave the ESIF programme. This includes the ESF Reserve Fund and the remaining funds that are stuck in the appraisal process. The LGA has called for the Government to urgently work with councils and combined authorities to ensure the remaining money is allocated quickly to support the national recovery from the pandemic, as well as the publication of the consultation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Contact officer: Sonika Sidhu
Position: Principal Policy Adviser
Phone no: 02076643076
E-mail: Sonika.Sidhu@local.gov.uk