

People and Places Board – Report from Cllr Martin Tett (Chair)

Digital

1. The Board has continued to support councils with the digital switchover. Following publication of the [digital switch readiness survey](#) to understand councils' position on awareness, planning and implementation, the [digital switchover hub](#) has been updated in collaboration with key partners and social media assets and the leaflet contained within the [communications toolkit](#) have been revised incorporating feedback from councils.
2. The Board commissioned a survey to better understand how the 2G/3G switch off might impact the sector, what services will be most affected and levels of awareness. This information will better help the Board understand how councils can be supported throughout the process to inform its work lobbying Government and supporting the sector with digital connectivity and inclusion. The survey closed in September and the results have been published on the [digital switchover hub](#). A [press release](#) highlighting councils' concerns was [covered by the FT](#).
3. Cllr Mark Hawthorne met with Simon Fell MP, the UK's first Rural Connectivity Champion, on 7 August to welcome him to the role. Following this meeting, Simon Fell has been invited to attend the next People and Places Board to discuss how the Board can work with Government to improve connectivity in rural areas.

Levelling up

4. The NHS Confederation, through its Health Economic Partnerships work programme and ICS network, established a time-limited health and devolution working group. The aim of the group was to understand the priorities, opportunities, and challenges for ICS leaders, how this intersects with English devolution to date and the emerging devolution deals. The Board co-sponsored the group alongside the City Regions and Community Wellbeing Boards. Four meetings took place in April, June, July and September and officers from the LGA and NHS Confederation are finalising the report encapsulating the findings from the working group.

Employment and skills

5. As we move towards a General Election in 2024, our aim is that a returning Government or new administration will adopt LGA's Work Local proposals for employment and skills devolution, which was jointly developed by the People and Places and City Regions Boards. The LGA has established a working group of officers from councils, devolved authorities and local government partner bodies to develop finer detail.

6. On 8 December, Cllr Amanda Serjeant (Board Vice Chair) represented the LGA at roundtable discussion of Barnsley Council's Pathways to Work [Commission](#). Chaired by the Rt Hon Alan Milburn MP, it is looking at local and national approaches to addressing unemployment and economic inactivity. The LGA gave evidence about Work Local and our [recent commissioned analysis](#) about local and national support to help people into work.
7. The LGA continues to support discussions between councils outside of devolution areas and the Department for Work and Pensions on the design of Universal Support, a new employment support programme to help people back into work, which is set to be rolled out in 2024. Discussions have been positive, with DWP set to grant fund councils to run this programme. It represents a step change in DWP's thinking on how employment support can be delivered with and through local government and we are working through a range of issues about how to operationalise this.
8. The LGA has continued to support the local government representative on the cross departmental Ministerial Green Jobs Delivery Group and have been taking a leading role in the Local Capacity and Capability sub-group, regularly seeking member input over the last year and engaging closely with partners. This has been an opportunity to put forward the case for a [Green Jobs framework](#), based on the principles of the LGA's [Work Local model](#). The sub group will be putting forward suggested recommendations for the Government's Green Jobs Action Plan in the first quarter of 2024. Lead members of City Regions, People & Places and the Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Boards have provided further feedback on the recommendations in December 2023.
9. Councillor Louise McKinlay along with Councillor Robert Alden from the City Regions Board continue to support the work of the Youth Employment UK Youth Commission. The Commission aims to understand the impact of the Department for Education's decision to remove funding and support for some Level 2 Apprenticeships and for some Level 2 and Level 3 vocational qualifications and to propose solutions that will 'allow all young people to flourish'. The Commission is due to produce a final report in January/February 2024 with policy recommendations.
10. To build on the People and Places and City Regions Boards' joint work to ensure economic inclusion, we have commissioned Pragmatix Advisory to examine how the transport system impacts people and places by limiting or enabling access to skills, training, and the labour market. The project will explore six to eight (coastal/rural/urban) places with different typologies to illustrate the impact of transport challenges and make a set of short-term and long-term policy recommendations.

Growth funding

11. The Board, alongside the City Regions Board, has jointly commissioned Athey Consulting to carry out a piece of technical analysis of previous and existing

growth funds, identify the benefits and challenges of current methodologies used and lessons learned, and explore an alternative future model of growth funding which provides certainty and flexibility for councils which can be used to influence the next or successor government in their preparation for successor growth funds.

12. The Board, alongside the City Regions Board, has also commissioned Henham Strategy to develop a series of action learning sets to provide an opportunity for local areas to work through the challenges and opportunities of LEP integration, with the findings published for other areas to benefit too. The findings from this research will be used to support the LGA's lobbying of central government to provide further support to councils and combined authorities with LEP integration.
13. This builds on work carried out by Shared Intelligence between November 2022 and March 2023 to develop support for councils and combined authorities undertaking LEP integration and share good practice and learning through a series of workshops. Most of the research was conducted before the Chancellor said he was 'minded to' end funding to LEPs from April 2024 and for their functions to be delivered by local government.
14. Cllr Martin Tett, Chairman of the People & Places Board hosted a webinar, attended by 196 people, to share the learning from local government's leadership of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Presentations were delivered by East Riding of Yorkshire, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Forest of Dean and Cotswold district councils. The webinar covered some of the challenges and opportunities the fund has brought, as well as the sharing of good practice.