



## People & Places Board – report from Cllr David Hodge (Chairman)

### Non-Metropolitan Commission

1. The Non-Metropolitan Commission published its final report [Devolution to Non-Metropolitan England: Seven steps to growth and prosperity](#), on 5 March. The Commission made seven specific recommendations for reform to shape the way economic growth and public service transformation are supported in the future. The Commission highlighted the applicability of the recommendations to not only the non-metropolitan areas but also the city regions and emphasised that the recommendations could be implemented by the new government early in its term to give the country a further boost along the road to recovery.
2. The seven recommendations covered prosperity (skills and foreign direct investment), infrastructure (planning and transport, housing, digital connectivity and investment in infrastructure) and governance making the point that the Commission considers that the way we take decisions in England is holding us back.
3. Viscountess Cobham, the Chairman of VisitEngland and a Commissioner, represented Sir John Peace, the Commission Chairman, at the March meeting of the People and Places Board. Following a short brief on the thoughts and philosophy behind the Commission's report, which was warmly received by the Board, she responded to comments from members and undertook to stay in touch with the LGA in order to hear about progress with delivering the recommendations.

### Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill

4. As part of the Queen's Speech the Government has announced a Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill. The Bill will provide the legal basis to implement the Government's 'northern powerhouse' ambitions, by devolving powers to cities with elected 'metro mayors.' Importantly, the Bill will also empower towns and counties by building on the Growth Deals, and pledges to lift the statutory restrictions on the remit of combined authorities. The inclusion of non-metropolitan areas in the Bill is a welcome step and we look forward to working with government to ensure the deals on offer for non-metropolitan areas are every bit as ambitious as those for cities.

### English Devolution: Local Solutions for a successful Nation

5. The People and Places Board played a lead role in the development of the Local Government Association's [white paper on devolution](#), which calls for a broadening of devolution policy to include areas outside England's larger cities. The paper sets out an overarching view from across local government on what could be achieved through

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devolution and how progress can be made across the country over the course of this parliament.

6. The paper identifies key decisions that need to be taken by Government in the first Queen's Speech and next Spending Review to accelerate progress on devolution. It also recognises that local areas need to strengthen their governance arrangements in order to be able to take on substantial new responsibilities. To that end, the paper pushes for places to be able to bring forward proposals that reflect the arrangements that would be most appropriate for their area, rather than having a single model imposed on them. The paper was featured on the BBC evening news and has been downloaded nearly 10,000 times.
7. Members of the Board will be discussing the Bill, the Government's other commitments, and our future work on devolution at our final meeting of the year on June 18. Our aim is to ensure that we are pushing the Government to be as ambitious as possible, while helping non-metropolitan areas capitalise on the tremendous opportunity the Bill presents.

### Employment, skills and welfare

8. At the end of March 2015, the LGA put forward the case for groups of councils to have the power, funding and responsibility to integrate and commission employment and skills provision to plan employment and skills investment across places to get more people into work, help low paid people progress in work, and address the skills demand for achieving local growth.
9. Championed by the chairs of the City Regions, People and Places and Children and Young People Boards, the recommendations in [Realising Talent: a new framework for devolved employment and skills](#) include **introducing Local Labour Market Agreements across England by 2016/17** as the basis of a deal between groups of councils and central government on what is needed and how it can be achieved. This should as a minimum include devolution or co-commissioning of at least £13.6 billion employment and skills funding over the next five years including **replacing and devolving the Work Programme worth £620 million annually with two programmes** – one for long-term Jobseeker Allowance claimants and the other to support up to 2.55 million disadvantaged claimants who have a range of barriers to sustainable jobs including ESA claimants; **devolving £2 billion a year Adult Skills Budget** to gear the skills system to the needs of businesses; co-commissioning **Job Centre Plus' annual £100million Flexible Support Fund** so local support for claimants is aligned to local economic priorities; completing the transfer of 16 to 19 education funding to local partnerships; and a **new youth offer** enabling all 14 to 21 or 24-year-olds to access independent careers and employment advice, and to coordinate and deliver services to support every young person not learning or earning. A National Employment and Skills Partnership should bring together central and local government, business, voluntary and community sector and other stakeholders to drive efforts to enable integrated funding and services to put people and places first, rather than institutions.
10. This is the final in a [series of three reports](#) commissioned to the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion to analyse the skills and employment challenges to be faced by an incoming or returning Government, and offer a proposed localised solution.

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