

Humber Leadership Board

Briefing Paper

Author: Simon Green, Deputy CX – NLC

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Subject: **Levelling Up – White Paper**

1. Introduction

The Levelling Up White Paper reflects the Government aim to level up the socio-economic performance and opportunity of the UK. Its approach is to take the radical steps needed to make the country more prosperous and more united by tackling the regional and local inequalities that unfairly hold back communities and to encourage private sector investment right across the UK.

The White Paper describes the practice and the practical steps the government will take in everything from education to art to investment that will achieve this goal. It follows a structured path of audit, system change and objective setting followed by policy and product to address the identified needs.

At its heart is the mantra of “Stay local, go far.”

2. What’s in it?

Billed as a twenty-first century recipe for a new Industrial Revolution, based on harnessing an array of interventions and catalysing a range of sectors. Levelling up strives to boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging behind, spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest; restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost, and empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.

The Levelling up white paper states that a focused, long-term plan of action and a clear framework to identify and act upon the drivers of spatial disparity is needed. Evidence from a range of disciplines tells us these drivers can be encapsulated in six “capitals”. • Physical capital – infrastructure, machines and housing. • Human capital – the skills, health and experience of the workforce. • Intangible capital – innovation, ideas and patents. • Financial capital – resources supporting the financing of companies. • Social capital – the strength of communities, relationships and trust. • Institutional capital – local leadership, capacity and capability.

This new policy regime is based on five mutually reinforcing pillars.

First, the UK Government is setting clear and ambitious medium-term missions.

1. Pay, employment and productivity will rise in every area of the UK
2. Increasing government investment in R&D by 40% outside the South-East (with the hope private investment follows) to stimulate innovation and productivity growth
3. Improving public transport connectivity across the country (emulating London) - this was the essence of National Bus Strategy (Bus Back Better) published last year, which looked to improve services, introduce simpler fares with integrated ticketing
4. Completing the nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage rollout, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population (a previous investment and policy commitment)
5. Improving primary school education attainment so that 90% of school children achieve the expected academic standards (improving by a third in the worst performing areas of the UK)
6. Increasing the number of people completing high-quality skills training (200,000 more trained annually, of which 80,000 will be in the lowest skilled areas of the UK)
7. Narrowing the gap in 'Healthy Life Expectancy' (HLE) between highest and lowest areas, leading to an overall national increase in this metric rising of 5 years by 2035
8. Improving 'well-being' in every area of the UK
9. For people's 'pride in place', defined as their satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, to rise in every area of the UK
10. To give renters a secure path to residential property ownership, increasing the number of first time buyers, and reducing the number of non-decent rented homes by 50%, with the biggest improvements in the lowest performing areas
11. Reducing serious crime including homicide, serious violence, and neighbourhood crime, with this mission focused on the worst-affected areas
12. Giving every part of England that wants a devolution deal the powers, with a simplified, long-term devolution deal funding settlement.

Second, central government decision-making will be fundamentally reoriented to align policies with the levelling up agenda and hardwire spatial considerations across Whitehall.

Third, the UK Government will empower decision-makers in local areas by providing leaders and businesses with the tools they need. A new framework will extend, deepen and simplify local devolution in England. This includes a 3 level template for devolution asks and powers and commensurate leadership and governance models. The proposed Hull and East Yorkshire deal was name checked as one of 9 such arrangements soon to be ratified.

Fourth, the UK Government will transform its approach to data and evaluation.

Fifth, the UK Government will create a new regime to oversee its levelling up missions, establishing a statutory duty to publish an annual report analysing progress and a new external Levelling Up Advisory Council.

The White Paper then articulates many areas of system reform, policy change and new product to address the key issues identified.

Key areas impacting on Local Government are: Housing (quality and provision), Planning (potential development levies and brownfield development), new powers regarding letting of vacant private sector retail property, skills initiatives with the private sector, enabling communities and associated asset development, new external performance monitoring regime for Local Authorities, streamlining of funding regimes, revised remit for Homes England and the general encouragement of private / public partnerships (highlighted through and named “Opportunity Humber”), the Local Authority lead role for the shared prosperity fund and the opportunity for sustainable funding streams through a revised business rates system in 2023.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Welcome the Levelling Up White Paper as a step forward in addressing economic opportunity nationwide and in approaching this in a coherent and inclusive way.
- 3.2 Engage collectively with Government in helping to develop the Opportunity Humber initiative.
- 3.3 Engage collectively with Government on future initiatives that impact on the Humber Leadership Boards four key areas of activity – Decarbonisation / Energy, Freeports, Humber 2100 and cross estuary marketing.
- 3.4 Recognise respective differing and evolving devolution models and ensure where possible synergy and cohesion.