

Devolution of powers to local government

Recommendation Eight: *The Government should urgently make clear its plans for the further devolution of powers to local authorities post-Brexit and publish its proposed new Devolution Framework within one month of the UK's withdrawal from the EU. The Government should include in that framework its plans for devolution in the various areas stakeholders have identified to us as priorities post-Brexit. The most notable of these is skills, but also fiscal devolution; housing; transport and other infrastructure; digital connectivity; health and wellbeing; trade and investment; and productivity. The Government should also assess the potential merits of bringing forward an English Devolution Bill, as proposed by the LGA, in its first Queen's Speech after the UK has left the EU.*

Government Response: The Government accepts the Committee's recommendation, with the caveat that it will set out its approach to devolution in England and provide clarity to areas as soon as practicable.

Since 2015 the Government has made considerable progress on devolution in England, strengthening local leadership and institutions and devolving powers and funding. It has devolved significant powers to seven mayoral combined authorities – Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, North of Tyne, Tees Valley, the West Midlands, the West of England – and is providing investment funds totalling nearly £5.5 billion over 30 years.

Devolution of powers to local authorities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is a matter for the Devolved Administrations to consider.

In England, the UK Government currently sees as a priority the full implementation of the Sheffield City Region devolution deal and has made clear that it is ready to consider a different localist approach to devolution across Yorkshire, if that is the local wish.

It would not be right to commit to a deadline of a month after EU Exit for publishing a document addressing where responsibility for exercising various powers might most appropriately sit but the Government remains committed to setting out its approach to future devolution in England. We aim to be able to provide local areas with this clarity on how best to take forward their devolution and local growth ambitions as soon as practicable.

As to priority matters to be included in its plans for future devolution, the Government notes the suggestions that various stakeholders have made to the Committee and intends to take decisions on this in the context of its discussions and consultations with stakeholders about devolution. These decisions will also be informed by the experience of devolution deals that have already been put in place, and which provide for 36% of England's population (including London) to have a directly elected city-region mayor with new powers to stimulate job creation, improve skills, build homes and make it easier to travel.