



Government Response to the 5th Report of the House of Lords Liaison Committee on the Future of Seaside Towns

Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for
Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
by Command of His Majesty

November 2023

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Introduction

The government welcomes the follow-up report of the Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities that was published on 21 July 2023. We are grateful to the Committee and all those that provided evidence to it.

The structure of this paper corresponds to the recommendations in the committee's report. The text taken from the Select Committee report is highlighted in **bold**.

Coastal communities policy and coordination

- 1. The Committee believes greater coordination and recognition is needed for seaside towns and communities. The Committee recommends that the Government allocates responsibility for seaside towns and communities to a Ministerial portfolio in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. This will create a point of reference for local areas and key stakeholders, and demonstrate the importance of these areas in achieving the levelling up agenda. (Paragraph 25)**

As set out in the Levelling Up White Paper, the Government is committed to levelling up the whole of the UK to raise living standards and spread prosperity across the country and in all kinds of communities.

The Government believes that Levelling Up is best approached by taking a broad, holistic approach which allows interventions to be efficiently and effectively targeted at the places with greatest need, regardless of where they are.

We have robust and cross-Government governance of the levelling up agenda. This includes consideration of levelling up in different places and types of place across the country. We have also established a delivery framework providing clear lines of accountability and facilitating interdepartmental cooperation. This will be further solidified by the passage of the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill. The Government does not believe establishing a separate and specific structure to focus only on coastal communities would represent an effective use of resources or the best approach to improving those communities.

The broader focus of Levelling Up policy does not, however, preclude a recognition of the particular challenges facing certain types of community, such as coastal or seaside towns. In recognition of these challenges, coastal communities have been specifically added to the portfolio of the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Levelling Up.

- 2. The Minister with this portfolio should attend all meetings of the interministerial Group on Levelling Up to ensure that a coastal lens can be applied to the topics discussed. (Paragraph 26)**

The Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG) on Levelling Up was established to drive progress on Levelling Up across Government, through the lens of Place and Missions. It is chaired by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Levelling Up, with responsibility for coastal communities, will also attend the IMG, alongside other Ministers from relevant Departments.

The IMG covers a range of places and issues. We are committed, however, to ensuring that the specific challenges and opportunities of different places and types of places, including coastal towns and communities, are considered where appropriate in these discussions and in wider policy-making.

- 3. The Committee has heard again about the distinctive set of challenges faced by coastal communities. The Government should work with the Local Government Association, coastal interest groups, the private sector, the third sector and other key stakeholders to develop a coastal communities strategy in order to demonstrate clear mechanisms to successfully address the long-standing disparities faced by seaside towns and communities. A draft strategy should be put to the House of Commons Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee to ensure effective scrutiny of the strategy ahead of implementation. This work should be started as a matter of urgency to ensure that disparities do not become further entrenched. (Paragraph 27)**

The Government recognises that coastal communities face particular challenges which may differ from the nearest inland neighbours and is committed to understanding better and responding to these challenges through improved data and closer cooperation with local authorities and communities, as well as through targeted interventions such as Levelling Up Partnerships.

We have no current plans to bring forward a specific strategy for coastal communities. The Government believes that Levelling Up is best approached by taking a broad, holistic approach, targeting the places with greatest need, regardless of where they are. This does not preclude a recognition of the particular challenges facing certain types of community, such as coastal or seaside towns.

Support for regeneration - leadership

- 4. The Committee recognises the complexity of the challenge faced in integrating LEPs into local democratic institutions and welcomes the further consultation being carried out to ensure future integration and funding changes can be managed effectively. We encourage the Government to respond promptly to the findings to give clarity for both LEPs and local authorities. The work achieved by LEPs and the ongoing work they are part of must not be lost as the transition takes place. (Paragraph 36)**

On 4 August 2023, the Government confirmed that from April 2024 it will support local authorities to take on the core functions currently delivered by LEPs.

We have published [guidance](#) for LEPs and local authorities to support them through this policy change and we are working closely with local areas and the LEP Network to ensure a smooth transition of LEP functions into relevant local authorities.

- 5. The Committee believes the relationship between local authorities and the private sector is integral to the regeneration of seaside towns and communities and we urge the Government to ensure that this is not lost as local authorities begin to undertake the functions of LEPs. The private sector must be kept informed by local democratic**

institutions what form these new integrated responsibilities will take so they have a clear understanding of how to maintain their involvement in the development of local communities. The new structures integrating LEP responsibilities must facilitate frank and open input from local businesses. (Paragraph 37)

The [guidance](#) on the integration of LEP functions into local democratic institutions, published on 4 August, encourages “single upper tier local authorities, or local authorities working together across a prospective devolution deal geography or functional economic area, to create or continue to engage with an Economic Growth Board (or similar) made up of local business leaders and relevant representative bodies to:

- (a) provide the view of local businesses as part of regional decision making and
- (b) work with local leaders to create a broad economic strategy for the area”.

The [English Devolution Accountability Framework](#) also makes clear that “all institutions with devolved powers should embed a strong, independent, and diverse local business voice into their decision-making processes”.

6. The Committee continues to believe that any structures responsible for the leadership of the development and economic growth of areas with a coastal aspect should ensure there is an emphasis on addressing the needs of coastal communities. Coastal communities and their needs and priorities must not be lost amid broader local authority economic agendas, both national and local. (Paragraph 38)

The [guidance](#) on the integration of LEP functions into local democratic institutions makes clear that one of the guiding principles for business representative boards is to include a diverse range of businesses related to local economic strengths and priorities. The guidance is clear that “this should include businesses of all sizes and businesses which are geographically diverse, e.g., urban, rural, coastal businesses as appropriate to the local area”.

7. The need for collaboration and information sharing across areas which face similar challenges, such as seaside towns and communities, remains essential. The Government should consider how the valuable work of networks can be built into the planned integration of LEPs into local authorities. The Government must consult the Local Government Association and interested parties to consider how information sharing and a collective voice can be created for this new integrated structure. (Paragraph 39)

The Government recognises the importance of collaboration and information sharing across areas which face similar challenges. We are open to working with relevant networks, including the Local Government Association as appropriate, as LEP functions are integrated into local authorities. In particular, Government has committed to supporting the LEP Network over 2024/25 so that it can work in partnership with areas to ensure this period of transition is planned and delivered as smoothly as possible.

8. The Committee welcomes steps to grant greater powers to local areas to enable greater place-based decision making. It remains essential that coastal towns and communities are not lost amongst the challenges and competing concerns that local authorities face,

so future deals and local authority arrangements should reflect the needs of seaside towns and communities in their remit and appropriate geographical area. (Paragraph 48)

The Government's approach to English devolution since 2011 has brought the benefits of strong local leadership to coastal areas across England. Devolution will be critical to delivering our other levelling up missions, strengthening local leadership to act more flexibly and innovatively to respond to local need, whether on transport, skills or regeneration.

Since 2011 (excluding the Greater London region), we have done deals that cover many of our coastal communities. These deals will or already are giving their mayors and leaders greater local control over things like transport, infrastructure and skills.

Several devolution deals done to date have shown recognition of the specific needs of coastal places:

- In the North East, councils have committed to developing a strategic infrastructure plan which will include how to best protect valuable coastline.
- In Norfolk & Suffolk, DCMS will work with the accredited Local Visitor Economy Partnership for the region to help develop their visitor economies, with a view to harnessing the regional potential of both areas.
- In York and North Yorkshire, the Government is supporting the region to develop innovative local proposals to support its target of becoming net zero by 2034, and England's first carbon negative region by 2040; taking advantage of its diverse and extensive rural and coastal geographies.

The new 'combined county authority' model - which we are legislating for at the moment - will support the extension of devolution to more areas of England, especially rural areas beyond city regions.

Support for regeneration - funding and delivery

9. The Committee supports the Government's decision to review the current funding landscape in light of the universal feedback regarding the cost and complexity involved in accessing the currently available funds. The decision to move to a more formula based approach should ensure areas of greatest need, including seaside towns and communities, receive the funding they require. We recommend the Government consult on the current formula used to determine the areas of most need under the UKSPF to help inform any changes needed to the future formula-based funding stream. We urge the Government to publish its new funding plan as soon as possible. (Paragraph 85)

The Government is always open to working with a wide range of stakeholders when deciding how to distribute funding. As the UKSPF is now in delivery, we do not anticipate consulting on its current funding formula. When it comes to future allocative funding streams, we will of course continue to engage with interested parties as we determine the best way to achieve our levelling up aims.

Our recently published [Funding Simplification Plan](#) shows a commitment towards more allocative approaches, and we will continue to provide transparent methodology notes for future funding decisions. By reducing administrative burdens, this plan will support local authorities to maximise their return on spending, generating the best outcomes for communities.

10. Future funding streams should ensure that seaside towns and communities receive the additional support they need and recognition of the increased costs involved in supporting these communities. (Paragraph 86)

In recent years, the Government has announced over £10bn of funding for local authorities to spend on levelling up initiatives, including through the Levelling Up Fund, Towns Fund, Future High Streets Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This scale of funding is transformative, allowing local authorities to regenerate town centres, protect community assets and make visible improvements to local infrastructure. Just last week we announced our new Long-Term Plan for Towns, and several of the 55 towns across the United Kingdom are coastal including in Torquay, Ryde, Hastings, Clacton-on-Sea, Hartlepool, Skegness, and Greenock, building on the Levelling Up Partnerships and 'deep dives' in places such as Middlesbrough and North East Lincolnshire (Grimsby).

We recognise that different areas have different needs and will continue to factor the needs of all parts of the UK into our policy development. This will ensure that we deliver our ambition to level up the whole of the United Kingdom.

11. Seaside towns and communities face a combination of deeply entrenched issues. To address these successfully, and make meaningful and sustained improvements, requires long-term consistent commitment, not a succession of short-term initiatives. The Government must find a way to provide the long-term funding that seaside towns and communities need to support effective regeneration and address systemic challenges. (Paragraph 87)

As set out in the Levelling Up White Paper, Levelling up is a long-term endeavour. It is a programme of change that requires a fundamental shift in how central and local government, the private sector and civil society operate.

The Government is focused on delivering this programme, which includes supporting local authorities to deliver high value targeted funding to unlock the potential of local economies and create visible change within places.

The Government recognises that some seaside towns and communities may need additional support. We engage closely with local authorities and continue to review how we can best support local places.

Our vision is to explore better join up across interconnected policy areas and investment programmes, reducing burdens for local authorities and fund bidders.

12. We recommend that the Government reviews the local government funding formula to assess its effectiveness in providing the level of support needed in coastal towns and communities. (Paragraph 90)

The Government remains committed to improving the local government finance landscape in the next parliament and has confirmed that the Review of Relative Needs and Resources, and a business rates reset, will not take place in this spending review period. This is in recognition of authorities calling for stability and certainty.

The Government will need to consider a range of factors in examining the effectiveness of its funding formulae in the future and how this affects different types of communities across England.

13. The Government should ensure that effective work is carried out to ensure that the funding streams made available are marketed to encourage private sector industry investment to match or contribute. More needs to be done to ensure that public funding streams are used to lever private investment in coastal areas to enable regeneration to take place. (Paragraph 94)

This government will continue to create and pursue opportunities to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of its funding.

We will encourage private sector industry investment through match funding and contributions where appropriate, as part of our focus on delivering high-value targeted funding to coastal areas and communities across the United Kingdom.

14. The Committee welcomes the announcement of Levelling Up Partnerships and is encouraged by the Government's approach of working closely with local areas to ensure tailored approaches to tackle key concerns for those areas. The Government should ensure there is an assessment of what worked in pilot areas and to learn from this for future Levelling Up Partnerships. The Government must also establish effective mechanisms to share experiences and best practice from Levelling Up Partnerships with other local authorities facing similar challenges, such as other seaside towns and communities. We understand Levelling Up Partnerships cannot take place in every location across the UK, but it is essential that lessons learned are shared in order to assist in bringing about effective change across the country. We recommend that the Government publish its mechanisms to share best practice before the end of the year so local authorities know how this will be accessed. (Paragraph 103)

Levelling Up Partnerships are a new approach to policy-making in England, and the Government is committed to learning from these Partnerships and using these insights to inform levelling up policy.

We encourage local areas to use existing forums and networks to share their experiences and lessons from their Partnerships.

15. The Government must evaluate the effectiveness of these Partnerships to identify what works best and consider what schemes or approaches could best be used in future to assist more areas. (Paragraph 104)

The Government is committed to learning from the Levelling Up Partnerships and using them to inform future levelling up policy.

Connectivity

16. Poor transport connectivity continues to blight seaside towns and communities, and sufficient progress has not been made to address this. The Committee recognises the efforts made in subsidies and funding streams. However the Government needs to go further to tackle systemic connectivity issues. The fundamental problem has not changed since 2019, and the Committee reiterates the 2019 recommendation that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities should work with the Department for Transport to ensure that areas of most need are properly prioritised for planning and investment. The current approach is clearly not effective, and innovative solutions are needed to provide transport networks that work for coastal areas. (Paragraph 127)

As set out in the Levelling Up White Paper, the Government is committed to levelling up the whole of the UK so that we raise living standards and spread prosperity across the country. Government is clear of the transformative potential that transport investment and delivery has on our ability to regenerate our towns and cities, driving up housing numbers and jobs. The Levelling Up White Paper commits to bringing local public transport connectivity across the country significantly closer to the standards of London by 2030, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing.

Growing and levelling up the economy represents one of the Department for Transport's strategic aims, as transport creates jobs, connects people with businesses and communities, fosters innovation and new industries, and facilitates trade and investment.

The Department for Transport is working closely with the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities to capitalise on the opportunities the delivery of transport infrastructure presents for local areas and work to better align investment decisions. In recent years analysts from both departments have worked closely to consider how appraisal work can support more joined up housing and transport delivery as well as updates to appraisal guidance to strengthen and integrate investment outcomes and benefits.

Through the Levelling Up Partnerships programme, which provides bespoke place-based regeneration to twenty of England's areas most in need of levelling up, including seaside towns and communities like Hastings and Torbay, the Department for Transport has sought to maximise the impact of its modal investment – improving economic growth and levelling up communities.

The Levelling Up Fund is also making funding available to support connectivity in coastal locations, including Cumbria, Isles of Scilly, and Cornwall, subject to business case.

Alongside this, the Department for Transport will soon publish the Future of Transport Rural Strategy. This strategy, like the Urban Strategy (2019), will set out how innovative new technologies and services can improve journeys in rural areas. The Department for Transport has consulted widely on the potential for innovation to improve the rural transport offer and has led engagement with key stakeholders to help develop the strategy. The strategy will adapt the Future Transport Principles to have a rural focus and will provide local authorities with useful case studies and examples of innovation in rural areas.

To strengthen infrastructure delivery, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill will require local authorities to prepare Infrastructure Delivery Strategies. These will allow local authorities to take a more strategic approach to infrastructure planning, setting out a strategy for delivering local infrastructure with the assistance of infrastructure providers and the local community. These are proposed to be partially informed by Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans, for which the Department for Transport's guidance places a significant emphasis on integrating walking and cycling networks with other transport modes and essential services to enhance the overall connectivity of a place.

To enable transport investment to have the most impact in our communities, the Department for Transport is also developing a connectivity metric that will enable planners of transport schemes to understand how connected any given location is to jobs, homes and essential services. This new evidence will facilitate integrated planning and investment, enabling decision-takers and policy makers to better assess the impacts of new transport schemes and interventions on an area's connectivity.

Since establishing Active Travel England as an executive agency of the Department for Transport in August 2022, 52% of the capital funding granted by government for active travel has been focused on the most deprived quintiles as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation. As part of its ongoing work programme, Active Travel England will work with local seaside towns to review opportunities for improved active travel provision to enable more tourism, access to jobs, and whether such investment could unlock development sites. This will help children get to school safely and independently, support people to walk, wheel or cycle to work and improve connectivity to other transport modes.

17. The Committee is disappointed in the progress that has been made to rectify the rail network losses resulting from the Beeching Report. More needs to be done to ensure that investment can continue in this area to protect those communities at the end of the line and build sustainable and effective connectivity. (Paragraph 128)

Through the Restoring Your Railway programme, the Dartmoor line (between Okehampton and Exeter) reopened in November 2021, opening two years ahead of schedule. Recently, Marsh Barton and Thanet Parkway stations opened through the New Stations Fund 3. More lines and stations are expected to be delivered from 2023/4 onwards, including the Northumberland line in summer 2024 and White Rose station in early 2024.

The Restoring Your Railway Ideas Fund has also supported the progression of projects to delivery through alternative funding routes. The Mid-Cornwall Metro scheme was awarded of £1.5m from the RYR programme, allowing the scheme to develop a Full Outline Business Case to secure £51m from the Levelling Up Fund.

This Government's recent announcement of Network North, a new plan to deliver better transport for all, will see £36 billion invested in transport projects for towns, cities and rural areas across the whole country. This will include reopening lines to reconnect areas like Burton, Stocksbridge, and Waverley.

18. Progress has been made but digital connectivity remains a challenge in coastal areas. The Committee reiterates the need to prioritise digital connectivity in coastal areas, particularly in light of the lack of progress with transport options. Improved digital connectivity will enable coastal areas to capitalise upon the changed ways of working and the opportunities this presents for greater access to education and employment. (Paragraph 145)

The Government's priority to build a better, more secure, more prosperous future for the UK includes a clear commitment to grow the economy and create better-paid jobs and opportunity right across the country. To do this, it is vital that people who live and work in all parts of the UK, including in coastal areas, have access to fast, reliable mobile and broadband coverage.

The Levelling Up White Paper's digital connectivity mission committed to achieving nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage by 2030, with 5G coverage for all populated areas.

As of July 2023, ThinkBroadband reports that approximately 76.6% of premises across the UK have access to a gigabit-capable connection, a huge leap forward from January 2019, when coverage was just 6%. The government is targeting a minimum of 85% gigabit-capable coverage across the UK by 2025 and nationwide by 2030. We have created a policy and regulatory environment which encourages digital infrastructure competition in areas where deployment is commercially viable. As a result, there is currently a market of over 100 providers investing over £40 billion rolling out gigabit broadband all over the UK. We are assisting this commercial deployment by removing barriers to network rollout. For example, we introduced the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Act in 2022 which included provisions to make it easier for providers to upgrade, share and deploy telecommunications infrastructure.

In addition, we are rolling out Project Gigabit, a £5 billion programme to subsidise the delivery of gigabit-capable broadband to rural and hard to reach premises that will not be reached by suppliers' commercial plans alone. The fast, reliable connections delivered by Project Gigabit will level-up mostly rural and remote communities across the UK, and close the digital divide between rural, suburban and urban areas. Project Gigabit aims to maximise early delivery to premises without access to superfast (30 Mbps) broadband. While Project Gigabit is not specific to seaside towns or coastal areas, we expect them to benefit from this significant investment.

The majority of our Project Gigabit delivery will come through local and regional contracts. So far, we have awarded contracts to coastal communities across Cumbria, North Northumberland, Suffolk, Hampshire, Norfolk and Central and South West Cornwall.

Support for some communities is also available Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (GBVS). Eligible homes and businesses can apply for up to £4,500 to cover the costs of a gigabit-capable connection. An example of the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme delivering improved connectivity for a coastal community in Colwyn Bay was included in our [Project Gigabit progress update in November 2022](#).

Wireless networks also play an important role in providing connectivity. Currently 71% of the UK landmass has good 4G coverage from all four mobile network operators and this increases to 92% geographic coverage from at least one mobile network operator.

The government is committed to improving 4G mobile connectivity across the whole of the UK. The Shared Rural Network (SRN), developed by the UK's four mobile network operators and government, will extend 4G coverage to 95% of UK landmass by the end of 2025, enabling rural businesses and communities to thrive. The programme will improve mobile coverage for an extra 280,000 premises and 16,000km of roads – giving the UK the world-class digital infrastructure it deserves. The operators are already delivering coverage improvements with 4G coverage across the UK currently standing at 92%, an increase from 91% in March 2020 when the SRN agreement was signed. The operators have now deployed more than 150 new sites directly towards SRN requirements and have upgraded over 1,500 sites since the SRN programme began.

The deployment of 5G in the UK began in 2019 and basic, non-standalone, 5G coverage from at least one MNO is available outside 82% of premises. In April, the government published the [Wireless Infrastructure Strategy](#) that sets out our strategic framework for the development, deployment and adoption of mobile networks. It articulates a clear vision for how advanced wireless infrastructure can become an integral part of the fabric of the UK's economy and society by 2030. The Strategy also sets out steps we will take to ensure that all parts of the UK have the connectivity they need to unlock opportunities for growth and prosperity, including a new ambition for nationwide coverage of standalone 5G in all populated areas by 2030.

Education and skills: stimulating an entrepreneurial culture

19. The need to provide additional support to areas struggling with educational attainment and social mobility is clear. However, it is concerning that the Government has introduced a further initiative to tackle these issues without clearly demonstrating how this will produce better outcomes than the Opportunity Areas programme. (Paragraph 161)

Projects run in the Opportunity Areas covered a very broad age range and policy range, from intensive early years speech and language projects to delivering post-19 careers advice. The Government was keen to expand the programme to more areas, but also to ensure that it closely supported the aims of 2022 Schools White Paper. We therefore decided that the Education Investment Areas/ Priority Education Investment Areas programme would focus more tightly on key stage 2 and key stage 4 Maths and English outcomes, utilising the most effective approaches.

20. The Committee recommends that the Government keep the Education Investment Areas and Priority Education Investment Areas selected under review to assess whether these are effectively targeting the areas of greatest need. (Paragraph 162)

The Department for Education (DfE) accepts this recommendation. The targeting of all such initiatives is regularly reviewed. However, the Committee itself (para 164, see below) noted the importance of multi-year funding settlements, so it is important that there is some consistency, and that regular reviews do not generate uncertainty.

21. It is clear that different areas face different educational challenges, but where there is commonality, such as in coastal towns and communities, an emphasis should be placed on information sharing where interventions under the Education Investment Areas programme have been demonstrated to be effective. Areas which have not been

included within the EIAs should also be able to benefit from the lessons learned. The Department for Education should ensure it provides collated examples of best practice and shares the progress made. (Paragraph 163)

The Department for Education (DfE) accepts this recommendation. DfE is closely involved in the commissioning of appropriate support measures in Education Investment Areas. The programmes being used are evidence-based interventions, information about which is available on the Education Endowment Foundation's website.

22. The Government must ensure there is no repeat of the ad hoc extensions to the Opportunity Areas programme. The educational challenges faced by coastal communities, and other areas, are long-term and therefore EIAs and PEIAs must be properly organised as multi-year investments in order to tackle these. Schools need certainty. (Paragraph 164)

The Department for Education (DfE) accepts this recommendation. The Priority Education Investment Areas received a three-year funding settlement, in line with the spending review period.

23. We acknowledge the steps taken to focus on teacher recruitment and retention and the wider challenges faced in this regard across the country. However, a more targeted approach is needed for areas which have continuing and long term recruitment challenges such as seaside towns and communities. We reiterate the 2019 recommendation: that the Government should review its approach to seaside towns and communities and determine what focused actions can be taken to improve teacher recruitment and retention. (Paragraph 180)

The Department for Education (DfE) accepts the importance of targeted action for disadvantaged areas, and has already taken action on this. The Department takes a national approach to teacher recruitment and retention, supporting schools across England, including in coastal areas.

We are committed to recruiting and retaining the best teachers. We recently announced a 6.5% pay award for teachers and school leaders, recognising the vital role that teachers play. This will ensure that teaching will continue to be an attractive profession, including in coastal communities.

In addition, we are offering a Levelling Up Premium worth up to £3,000 tax-free annually for mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing for teachers in the first five years of their careers who choose to work in disadvantaged schools. For 2024/25 and 2025/26, we will be investing £100m each year to double the rates of the Levelling Up Premium to up to £6,000 tax-free. 69% of secondary or special schools in coastal towns (as defined by the ONS' Coastal Towns 2020 analysis) are eligible for the Levelling Up Premium, compared to 59% of schools elsewhere in the country. This supports the supply of teachers in the highest demand subjects and incentivises them to work in schools and areas that need them the most.

The Prime Minister has announced we will introduce the Advanced British Standard (ABS) for 16- to 19-year-olds. This will bring together the best of A Levels and T Levels to form a single overarching qualification. It will deliver genuine parity of esteem between technical and academic routes, increase teaching time for 16–19-year-olds, ensure all students study some form of English and Maths to age 18, and that students take a broader range of subjects. We are providing

£600m over the next two years to lay the groundwork for the ABS and invest in the teachers, and institutions that will be vital to delivering it. This will include £100 million each year, doubling the rates of the Levelling Up Premium and expanding it to cover all further education (FE) colleges, disproportionately benefitting disadvantaged students, including in our coastal communities. All teachers who are in the first five years of their career, teaching key STEM and technical shortage subjects and working in disadvantaged schools and all FE colleges, will be paid up to £6,000 per year tax-free.

Through the Initial Teacher Training market reform programme, we are increasing capacity and extending the reach of teacher training provision by offering grants up to £20,000 to accredited training providers that deliver training in an eligible area. These include coastal areas in regions including Cumbria, East Anglia, Tees Valley and Durham.

Coastal communities are also served by our network of Teaching School Hubs (TSHs) – school-led centres of excellence in professional development, delivering training and support to teachers and school leaders at every stage of their career. The 87 TSHs cover all of England, with 31 hubs serving 146 coastal areas across England.

Also, to support the further education workforce the Government is investing £185m in 2023-24 and £285m in 2024-25 to support colleges and other providers to address key priorities as they see fit, including tackling recruitment and retention issues. This investment is additional to the £125 million of funding we have already announced we will make available in financial year 2023-24 to boost the national 16 to 19 funding rate and subject-specific funding.

We will also continue to keep our further education workforce policies under review to ensure specific challenges, such as those faced by coastal communities, are being taken into consideration.

24. We commend the work being done to improve careers initiatives across schools and industry. This momentum needs to be maintained to ensure students receive the most effective support, experience the career pathways available and access the skills needed. (Paragraph 191)

The Department for Education (DfE) agrees it is important to maintain momentum in improving careers initiatives across schools and industry. Our broader skills reforms provide a ladder of opportunity for all to succeed, with the first rung of the ladder being the availability of high-quality careers advice to help people fulfil their potential. We have worked hard to lay the foundations of a coherent careers system, with strong collaboration between teachers, training providers and employers.

Government investment in the Careers Hubs Network, Careers Leaders and high-quality careers programmes through the CEC, the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge programme and collaboration with other partners is working. Over 90% of schools and colleges are now part of a Careers Hub, with Hubs achieving an average of 5.4 Gatsby Benchmarks against a target of 5 by August 2023. 2,727 Careers Leaders have now completed the funded Careers Leader training package, with this number set increase to 4,000 in total by October 2024. Since 2016, the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge programme has worked with over 5,500 schools and colleges, including offering support to 356 coastal communities' schools, as well as supporting

over 3.4 million students and over 230,000 parents/carers. The Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge programme has created and developed a series of sessions for academic year 23/24 to both support awareness and encourage uptake of the 18 'Career Starter Apprenticeships', offering young people the opportunity to start a careers journey leading to skilled, well-paying and in-demand jobs. Additionally, our recently launched three-year careers programme for primary schools across 55 Education Investment Areas will drive further progress, with evaluation informing future policy development.

We want to build on this momentum and drive greater progress, drawing on frontline insight of what works to support young people to make informed choices about their best next step and potential career pathway.

Furthermore, T levels are available in coastal areas across the country through providers covering the main coastal areas across the North East, Yorkshire, Eastern, South East, South West and North West coastlines. Examples of colleges providing T levels include Southport College, Bexhill Sixth Form College and Furness College. Also, a number of colleges in the Opportunity Areas Programme were early adopters of T levels such as Blackpool and The Fylde College, Weston College and Scarborough Sixth Form College. In addition, Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) began teaching in September 2022, with over 70 providers able to deliver them. This includes several in coastal regions – including East Coast College (Great Yarmouth), City College Plymouth (Plymouth), and East Kent College (Broadstairs).

The Department provides a range of financial support for students who need it to enable them to participate in post-16 education, including free meals, bursaries to help with the cost of education (such as travel, books, equipment, and trips), plus support for childcare and residential costs where required.

In AY23/24 over £160m of bursary funding has been allocated to institutions to help disadvantaged 16-19-yr-olds meet costs, nearly 12% higher than published allocations for last year and nearly 20% higher than the previous year (AY21/22). We have also made available c£20m each year specifically to support students in defined vulnerable groups, i.e. those in-care, care leavers and those supporting themselves in receipt of certain social security funds. To ensure that the distribution of this funding around the sector matches the needs of young people, we began moving to a new approach to allocating the fund from AY20/21, using up-to-date disadvantage data and focusing more on the costs of travel, ensuring institutions get more Bursary Fund if their students travel a long way or live in rural areas. AY23/24 allocations fully reflect this new approach after phasing in over several years.

Institutions decide which young people receive bursaries and determine the level of financial support they offer. They can develop their own eligibility criteria, including setting a household income threshold appropriate to their area.

All 16-19 providers receive an allocation for 16-19 Bursary Fund. The formula reflects, among other things, the number of students expected to need T Level industry placements.

This can be used in line with the provider's policy on bursary eligibility to help students with their own costs in taking up industry placements - in travelling to and from their placement, for example.

25. The Government's future careers initiatives should encourage and prioritise partnership working across education sectors and with industry, in particular in coastal and isolated areas. Where best practice has been established this needs to be distributed across areas sharing similar challenges in connecting education with local businesses to create a pathway to support local economies. (Paragraph 192)

The Government accepts the importance of prioritising partnership working across education sectors and with industry.

As part of this year's grant funding agreement, The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) will focus on linking schools and colleges to employers and other external careers providers through the Network of Careers Hubs, with a strong emphasis on coordination and alignment with other relevant programmes, including the National Careers Service and the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge programme. CEC's growing network of Cornerstone Employers and Enterprise Advisers is also enabling increasing alignment between industry and careers provision. This year, Careers Hubs will connect all Cornerstone Employer Groups with the establishment and implementation of Local Skills Improvement Plans.

As part of CEC's focus on experiences of the workplace, an additional £1.9m will be provided this year to drive more high-quality experiences with employers and increase knowledge of the world of work for young people in coastal and rural communities. The funding will deliver three distinct strands of activity: high quality work experience for up to 15,000 young people with the greatest economic disadvantage; experiences with 20 employers from key growth sectors for up to 5,000 young people with a guarantee of a high-quality mock interview; and virtual experiences for year 7-9 pupils in up to 600 institutions in coastal and rural areas.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) works closely with the Careers & Enterprise Company to use the extensive employer network to support schools and students by providing advice on routes into traineeships and apprenticeships, linking schools with employers to identify work experience opportunities, facilitate jobs fairs and provide advice on the local labour market and soft skills required by local employers.

Furthermore, DfE's Apprenticeship Ambassador Network (AAN) is a group of employers and former/current apprentices who volunteer their time to encourage more employers to use high-quality apprenticeships; while inspiring more young people to pursue high-quality apprenticeships as a vibrant career route.

Alongside the AAN is the T Level Ambassador Network - membership includes employers, providers and T Level students, raising awareness of T Levels. Like the AAN, these individuals do so on a voluntary basis because they have a commitment to technical education and are keen to ensure all employers know and benefit from T Levels to help meet the employment needs of businesses. Of the 34 students registered as ambassadors, 3 are located near seaside towns: 2 in Truro (Health & Science) and 1 in Fareham (Digital & IT).

Also, Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) share a framework of employer-led occupational standards with apprenticeships and T Levels, making technical education at level 4 and 5 more coherent and easier to navigate for students and employers.

DfE is investing up to c.£115m of funding to prime further education and university HTQ delivery across the country. This includes £21m available through the Skills Injection Fund (SIF) and up to a further £48m through SIF2 a mix of capital and resource which providers can spend on developing local employer partnerships to support students and drive-up demand for HTQs.

In addition, DfE is investing in a package of direct support for the Further Education Workforce in 2023-24, to continue to support the FE sector with the recruitment, retention and development of teachers. This includes a national recruitment campaign and Teach in FE service to support prospective FE teachers into jobs. We continue to offer FE teacher training bursaries in priority subjects; applications for the academic year 2023/24 opened on 7 March, with increased bursary values of up to £29,000 each, tax-free. The latest round of Taking Teaching Further is live, supporting FE colleges to recruit and support those with relevant knowledge and industry experience to retrain as FE teachers.

26. The Committee recognises and welcomes the work done by Government to provide greater support for post-16 transport costs. However, transport infrastructure continues to be a barrier to students attending education, training or work experience opportunities. If the Government is to see true levelling up, more needs to be done to ensure that public transport services are sufficient to meet the needs of seaside towns and communities. (Paragraph 200)

The provision of good quality local public transport services in seaside towns and elsewhere needs to be underpinned by a comprehensive strategy with a clear plan for the future of these services. That is one of the reasons why the Government has committed to publishing new guidance to enable Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) in England to update their statutory Local Transport Plan (LTP) by the end of the parliament.

This new guidance will support LTAs with current best practice in transport planning and policies to develop LTPs that are key to maintaining and improving local transport across England. LTPs will enable central government, as the primary provider of local transport funding, to understand the scale of action and investment needed to achieve transport objectives both within specific local areas and collectively across the country. The Department of Transport has already provided grant payments of at least £178,500 to all LTAs in 2022 to support the update of their plans and improve capacity.

Health and wellbeing

27. We welcome the targeted research to effectively identify and address health inequalities at a local level. We recommend that any findings from these collaborations should be shared with similar areas, to ensure that coastal areas which face similar challenges can apply any best practice in their own areas. (Paragraph 217)

Research is key to discovering how we can improve community health and reduce health inequality. Health Determinants Research Collaborations (HDRCs) are a UK wide initiative funded through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Public Health Research programme. They boost research capacity and capability within local government to embed a culture of always using evidence when making decisions on the issues they face.

In October 2022 NIHR invested £50 million into helping 10 Local Authorities and these include coastal areas of Aberdeen, Blackpool, Newcastle, Gateshead and Plymouth. The vision is to increase the HDRC investment in the longer term by bringing more HDRCs online systematically over the course of the next 5 to 10 years. Local Authorities can apply to become HDRCs and are judged based on the quality of their applications. A second round of funding is currently underway. As part of their funding HDRCs are expected to work effectively with other HDRCs. They are also expected to share good practice and learning and develop relationships with other local stakeholders and communities to serve the shared population's research needs.

28. We commend the work by Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer for England, to address health disparities in coastal areas. The Committee recommends the Government reconsider the recommendations made by the Chief Medical Officer, in particular the need for a national strategy, and consider whether its current broader approach is sufficiently effective in providing targeted support to the areas, such as coastal towns and communities, that need it the most. (Paragraph 218)

We recognise there are stark disparities in how long people live and how long people live in good health across England, and that in particular health outcomes are worse in many coastal towns than the UK average.

To address this, the Government is taking ambitious action to address health disparities across the country, including in coastal communities.

We are delivering on our commitment to improve healthy life expectancy by five years by 2035 and reducing the gap between areas where it is highest and lowest by 2030, as stated in the Levelling Up White Paper. To support this ambition:

- Our Major Conditions Strategy will explore how we can tackle the key drivers of ill-health in England, focussing on six major groups of conditions that account for around 60% of ill-health and early death in England. Our interim report '[Major conditions strategy: case for change and our strategic framework](#)' was published on 14 August which outlined our approach, including focussing on preventable risk factors, which are responsible for over 40 percent of ill health and early death.
- We are investing [£50 million](#) in research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Health Determinants Research Collaborations (HDRCs) to tackle health disparities in local areas and improve health outcomes across the country. This funding will drive progress to address health challenges locally, particularly in the places and communities most affected by ill health.
- The NIHR Health and Social Care Delivery Research (HSDR) Programme launched a call for research applications about the quality, accessibility and organisation of health and social care services in rural and/or coastal areas. These remote regions have been highlighted as in need of specific attention due to pronounced health disparities around access, experiences, and outcomes of care. The call closes in September 2023 and funded studies are expected to start in autumn 2024.
- Smoking is one of the most important preventable causes of disparities in health and a significant contributor to the gap in life expectancy. The Prime Minister has announced plans to create 'smokefree generation' by ending cigarette sales to those born on or after 1 January 2009. This will mean the age of sale is raised by one year each year to prevent future generations from ever taking up smoking, as there is no safe age to smoke .

- We have already restricted the placement of less healthy food in shops, provided the largest ever single increase in drug and alcohol treatment and recovery funding in England, and we remain committed to be Smokefree by 2030.
- The Department for Health and Social Care is continuing to focus on supporting people to live healthier lives, helping the NHS and social care to provide the best treatment and care for patients and tackling health disparities through national and system interventions such as the NHS's Core20PLUS5 programme.