

What urban leaders want from the Levelling Up White Paper

Centre for Cities
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Tracy Brabin

Mayor of West Yorkshire

Levelling up is not just about closing regional gaps between the North and South, it's also about narrowing the unacceptable socio-economic inequalities between communities and groups within our region.

I am using the powers and funding I have to support the people and businesses of West Yorkshire, but there are gaps in key areas and increased levels of devolved funding and powers are required to accelerate change.

Specifically, we need greater investment in transport to deliver a mass transit system for the region and commitment that Northern Power Rail and HS2 will be delivered in full. We need to empower local people with the skills they need for a fulfilling career, currently less than half the working age population have essential digital skills for work. Investment in flood resilience is required and long-term collaborative action to enable us to meet our net zero carbon emissions ambition. In addition, support for the local culture sector is key so that people do not have to move to London to have a stellar career in the arts.

Tracy Brabin
Mayor of West Yorkshire



Cllr Abi Brown

Leader of Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Stoke-on-Trent is we believe the national litmus test for the Government's levelling-up ambitions.

After years of social decline, pre-Covid-19 the city was undergoing the most significant transformation for over 30 years. Rebounding from the last recession, it had outstripped swathes of the UK in economic growth, job creation and innovation. And the momentum continued as we look to recovery beyond the pandemic.

But we must also now go deeper. Our city *Powering up Plan* hinges on four pillars; transport, economic development, education and skills and health and productivity – it's about improving life for the people in Stoke-on-Trent holistically and not just economically.

And our ask of government is clear. If you really want to level up places like this city, it won't be achieved by a succession of beauty parades for small pots of cash for centrally-directed pet projects. It will be secured by one joined-up conversation, a commitment to long-term partnership, to a shared vision of what Stoke-on-Trent could become and the resolve and funding to see it through. It means bending the will of individual Whitehall departments to shared goals, and structuring public investment to best lever private capital. The ultimate result will be small but mighty Stoke-on-Trent. We've got the plan – now help us to get on with it.

Cllr Abi Brown
Leader of Stoke-on-Trent City Council



Andy Burnham

Mayor of Greater Manchester

Greater Manchester has put forward a *Levelling Up Deal* to Government ahead of the Spending Review. It is a serious, positive offer which will deliver a London-style transport network with affordable London-level fares, accelerating our plans for a net zero future with better, greener homes and communities: and better jobs and skills.

Greater Manchester has made real progress in recent years, but we still need levelling up. Our *Levelling Up Deal* would deliver on the Government and Greater Manchester's shared ambitions – levelling up and tackling climate change.

Transport is the foundation of the deal and as Greater Manchester takes back local control of its buses, we're uniquely positioned to deliver a zero carbon, London-style, transport network.

If Government supports us with the right powers and funding, our *Levelling Up Deal* would:

- Deliver a London-style transport network with affordable London-level fares, moving us towards a zero carbon transport system
- Remove one million tonnes of carbon from Greater Manchester's economy
- Create attractive places to live, work and set up a business
- Create opportunities for people to retrain, get the skills they need and create jobs right across Greater Manchester
- Create a 'Golden Triangle' of innovation excellence within the towns and cities of the North, to drive UK growth

Andy Burnham
Mayor of Greater Manchester



Cllr Philip Broadhead

Deputy Leader of BCP Council

Here in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, we're a growing city region of around half a million residents – facing our own challenges and opportunities around levelling up. Like many, skills are the top of our agenda at the moment; making sure that we are curating the right set of skills for our young people for the future, whilst at the same time creating an environment where our current industries have the talent to flourish.

This is not a problem purely faced by the north of the country. The challenges in many southern areas is that the cost of living overwhelms the amazing opportunities that we have – a situation exacerbated by the pandemic, where people understandably had more choice about where they could live – with many of them choosing to come here! We can only level up skills and opportunities in more naturally 'prosperous', non-industrial urban areas if we put a singular focus on unlocking the cost of living crisis for the young.

Cllr Philip Broadhead
Deputy Leader of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole



Cllr Georgia Gould

Chair of London Councils

London is a great, dynamic global city which has a big role to play in the UK's economic recovery. But we also face huge challenges. There are thousands of communities living in poverty in London, who face serious barriers to finding work such as lack of digital skills or difficulty accessing the labour market. The economic impact of Covid-19 has hit London hard - our unemployment rate is the highest of any UK region.

To make meaningful change, we must recognise the strength rooted within our communities and ensure 'levelling up' empowers them to thrive. Strengthening community and local leadership is essential if London is to level up with the rest of the country. Councils need increased powers and funding to make lasting change in the places and communities they represent. Only through greater devolution will we see greater opportunities to tackle deepening inequalities.

Cllr Georgia Gould
Chair of London Councils



Cllr Peter Lamb

Leader of Crawley Borough Council

There is a myth of a poor North and a rich South. The reality is pockets of wealth and deprivation exist everywhere.

Crawley's aviation-heavy economy has felt the economic consequences of Covid-19 more than anywhere else. Yet, even before the pandemic one in three children were growing up in poverty, the mismatch between wages and house prices was amongst the UK's worst, and we had the lowest social mobility in the region. A 'return to normal' won't cut it.

For Crawley, levelling up means rebuilding the skilled work in light industry on which the New Town was founded, only this time focusing on green technology. Better paid employment, with strong growth prospects, and less vulnerable to automation.

While supportive national economic and trade policies are critical, on the ground investment in infrastructure and skills are central to ensuring the Johnson Administration's promises don't simply amount to 'levelling down' my community.

Cllr Peter Lamb
Leader of Crawley Borough Council



Cllr Graeme Miller

Leader of Sunderland City Council

Cities need to be given enhanced fiscal and policy tools to develop public private partnerships of significant scale to boost local economic growth. Sunderland is delivering levelling up through:

- Providing quality housing so everyone has a safe, sustainable, attractive environment to grow up in.
- Regenerating the city centre through our Sunderland Riverside project to make it a place where people want to live, work, and spend.
- Delivering world class digital connectivity to compete with similar sized cities on a global level and attract investment from the creative and tech industries.
- Developing public private partnerships to create skills clusters that deliver high wage jobs through our Sunderland Housing Ecosystem and Electric Vehicle Hub.

But we could go further if we had an enhanced relationship with Government - Nissan's investment in Sunderland shows what the Government, a private company and a city working together can achieve and we need more of this.

Cllr Graeme Miller
Leader of Sunderland City Council



Cllr Chris Poulter

Leader of Derby City Council

Derby is a city proud of its innovative past and ambitious for its future. Levelling up for Derby means investment and freedoms to help us tackle the economic and social challenges we are facing in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and drive sustainable recovery and growth alongside our partners.

The pandemic has demonstrated the critical role that local authorities play in leading their local areas. Government needs to empower local authorities such as Derby City Council to build on the excellent recovery work we have already achieved to create vibrant, green, resilient and growing places. Government also needs to instil confidence by addressing financial sustainability in the sector.

We see devolution of powers and funding to the region as key to levelling up - local authorities need flexibility to make bold improvements and deliver solutions that address local needs, working closely with our communities. Proper investment in infrastructure, skills and green technology is central to this, and Derby stands ready to work with Government, and our partners, on delivering this ambition.

Cllr Chris Poulter
Leader of Derby City Council