Go East and give London subregion growth to level up and deliver full potential, Localis report urges

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Press release

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Government must masterplan investment in the East of London to fulfil the immense economic, human and social potential of a vast subregion – which otherwise has more in common with 'left behind' parts of the country than the rest of the capital - the think-tank Localis has argued.

In a report published today entitled **'Local London and Levelling Up - the role of East and North East London in local, regional and national growth',** Localis makes the case for enhancing physical and digital connectivity to encourage professional industries to locate and take advantage of the fact London's geography is moving eastwards.

According to Localis, the boroughs of north and east London, which comprise the Local London subregion, have some of the highest levels of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country and enjoy lower economic productivity (GVA) per head than anywhere else in the capital let alone the Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region or West Midlands combined authorities.

Instead, the think tank argued, in a report commissioned by Local London, that the subregion has more in common with 'left behind' areas such as Cornwall, Teesside and West Wales, and as such should be eligible for the same money from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund as was earmarked under previous EU funding support.

Among its key recommendations, Localis calls for a subregional growth deal that would give the Local London subregion's leaders the power to 'masterplan' - alongside government and the Greater London Authority - an ambitious vision for the area, and dedicated funding to convene and coordinate constituent boroughs and external partners to 'level up' an area home to 2.3 million people.

Other report recommendations include calls to:

- **Unlock human potential:** in terms of skill levels, Local London lags the rest of the capital, which limits the opportunities of residents and reduces the desirability of the subregion as a location for business.
- **Develop investment opportunities:** including prospects for regeneration and development on brownfield sites and associated infrastructure improvements, as well as a need to double down on existing infrastructure projects in the Thames Estuary and the Innovation corridor.
- **Encourage government to build back better and level up East London** by working with the subregion and key partners like GLA, Thames Estuary Growth Board and Innovation Corridor to create and deliver a new masterplan for East London with proper investment to catalyse private investment.

Localis head of research, Joe Fyans, said: "London's geography is moving Eastwards – with multiple major developments with varying levels of national significance detailed in this report – and it is important that growth is managed, inclusive of residents and maximises national benefits.

"To ensure that the provision of skills, employment and housing are co-ordinated and serve the overarching national, regional and local goals for recovery and renewal, as well as being connected with the bordering areas to London and associated projects, a formalised subregional convening role is required.

"Local London needs a subregional deal for growth, giving the subregional leadership board power to convene and coordinate constituent boroughs and external partners in delivering levelling up. A multi-year 'masterplan', encompassing the different borough's local and corporate plans into an overall vision for the area must be agreed and funded between the boroughs, the government and the Greater

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London Authority."

Cllr Darren Rodwell, Chairman of Local London and Leader of Barking & Dagenham Council, said: "Local London has long feared the Government's levelling-up agenda would mean levelling-down London. Any loss of funding or opportunity in this part of London would be disastrous. We hope the Government's White Paper will provide us with some reassurance this isn't the case.

"It's a fact that East London was classified as a 'less developed' region by the EU – alongside others more traditionally regarded as deprived and left-behind in the north and west - and earmarked for more than £1 billion in cohesion funding between 2021-7 to help us catch up. That's now lost.

"As this report shows, our situation has been made even worse by the pandemic, and we risk falling even further behind without bold and imaginative thinking as well as funding. We need a long-term deal for growth and the ability to determine our own future, and we call on the Secretary of State to enable that."

END

Press enquiries:

Jonathan Werran, chief executive, Localis

(Telephone) 0870 448 1530 / (Mobile) 07967 100328 / (Email) jonathan.werran@localis.org.uk

Notes to Editors:

1. **An advance copy of the report is available for download under embargo conditions:**

https://www.localis.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/041_LocalLondon_AWK.pdf

1. **About Localis**

Localis is an independent think-tank dedicated to issues related to politics, public service reform and localism. We carry out innovative research, hold events and facilitate an ever growing network of members to stimulate and challenge the current orthodoxy of the governance of the UK.

www.localis.org.uk

About Local London

Local London is one of four sub-regional partnerships in our Capital City. Founded in 2016, we are a group of eight Conservative and Labour councils in the North East and South East of London representing around 2.3 million residents and 100,000 businesses. Our population makes us larger than Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool combined.

Through our three-year Local London Plan, we work collectively to enable growth. Residents and businesses in this part of London do not benefit from the advantages of living and operating in the Capital City so we seek to remedy that in two specific ways.

Firstly, we deliver a £60 million set of 'soft growth' programmes and projects targeted at specific groups of our population and businesses. For example:

- The DWP Local London Work and Health Programme - which helps people with disabilities and long-term unemployment back into work through bespoke support.
- The DWP Local London Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS) Programme - which supports people made unemployed by the pandemic to re-enter work.
- London East Careers Hub - which provides careers provisions to schools, colleges and PRUs in

this region.
- E-business programme – which supports SME businesses to capitalise on digital marketing and emerging technologies.
- We also deliver initiatives around improvements to digital infrastructure and are developing a new Green partnership which will focus on the emerging net zero economy.

Secondly, we champion, influence and advocate for our region by bidding for new funding, lobbying for change and improvement, and seeking devolution opportunities. The Local London sub-region is at the confluence of two nationally important growth corridors (The UK Innovation Corridor and Thames Estuary), and we work practically with both of those to generate growth and capitalise upon opportunity.

https://www.local.london/

1. **Key report recommendations**

Recommendation: Levelling up in Local London

A master plan deal for Local London

Good planning is essentially to sustainable and good quality growth in the Local London area. Coherent strategy at the sub-regional level can help achieve levelling up for residents in left-behind areas of Local London, whilst also benefitting the national agenda by providing the receipts of boosted growth to the Treasury.

London's geography is moving Eastwards – with multiple major developments with varying levels of national significance detailed in this report – and it is important that growth is managed, inclusive of residents and maximises national benefits. To ensure that the provision of skills, employment and housing are co-ordinated and serve the overarching national, regional and local goals for recovery and renewal, as well as being connected with the bordering areas to London and associated projects, a formalised subregional convening role is required.

Local London needs a subregional deal for growth, giving the subregional leadership board power to convene and coordinate constituent boroughs and external partners in delivering levelling up. A multi-year 'masterplan', encompassing the different borough's local and corporate plans into an overall vision for the area must be agreed and funded between the boroughs, the government and the Greater London Authority.

Key features

- The master plan would tie in and be developed in consultation with key stakeholders of the Innovation Corridor and the Thames Estuary Growth Board to give a full impression of the growth trajectory across the area.
- Producing a long-term vision for the subregion would provide stability conducive to business investment and give an impression of the aggregate skills demand of the future labour market, allowing for better collaboration between Local London and local further and higher educational institutions.
- To ensure proper local buy-in and to capture the benefits of local expertise, community consultation must be a golden thread throughout the document – from ensuring and promoting the use of both digital and physical consultation on individual local plans, through to maintaining a clear and transparent working process in devising the overall master plan.
- Targets for the master plans' outcomes in residents' lives must be agreed between all tiers of governance at the outset, with clear and definable metrics identified for levelling up quality of life, employment and environment in left behind communities.

Funding requirements

The key requirement for a master plan would be funding for the process of devising and carrying out the plan, along with 'buy-in' support from both a central government and GLA level. The subregional leadership must have the funding to recruit qualified and capable staff, and must also have the certainty that this funding will not be withdrawn at the change of a political cycle. Agreeing the aims and scope of a master plan deal could be carried out in broadly the same manner as devolution deals are reached between government and devolved areas, where funding is provided for the administration of the master planning process based on key shared outcomes.

Company Contact:

Localis

T. 0870 448 1530
E. jonathan.werran@localis.org.uk
W. https://www.localis.org.uk

Additional Contact(s):
07967 100328

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