"Levelling Up White Paper should let country devolve and grow its own way, Localis report urges"

Thursday 6 May, 2021

Ministers must seize the opportunity of forthcoming Levelling Up White Paper to ensure every part of the country has the freedom to achieve dynamic growth, a new report issued today by Localis has asserted .

In a paper issued today entitled **'A Plan for Local Growth'** – which analyses the government's blueprint for economic revival from a place-based viewpoint – the think-tank calls on government to ensure the recently-announced Levelling Up White Paper supports community control of high-street regeneration, accelerates devolved skills reforms and defines a clear role for local authorities and their economic partners in driving economic development and meeting net zero targets.

In its analysis of government growth plans, the report authors advise on a strict separation between short-term, community-led decision-making for town centre and high-street renewal - which boosts place prosperity - and long-term, high-value central government infrastructure strategies aimed at raising historic low-levels of productivity.

To build on the foundations laid out in the Plan for Growth – launched alongside the March Budget, the study recommended that the Levelling Up White Paper should:

- Create pathways to community autonomy as a vehicle for hyperlocal, small-scale and patient financing of regeneration.
- Build a framework for devolution to Skills Advisory Panels to facilitate local collaboration between employers, providers and education authorities to further accelerate the push to improve skill levels.
- Create a clear role for the local state in driving towards the skills for net zero.
- Clarify and codify the role for existing institutions of the local state particularly local authorities in LEPs – in driving economic development.

Localis's head of research, Joe Fyans, said: "Any government plans to move forward with devolution need to prioritise the task of restoring the nation's economic and social fortunes and should not be fixated by the view that doing so inevitably means ringing in the changes to the governance structures of the local state.

"Ultimately, if an English devolution settlement is to achieve success, we will need a central government that does not micromanage every last line of local public expenditure or devise strategies that affect the destinies of places in the abstract, without consultation or deep understanding of local context."

Localis chief executive, Jonathan Werran, said: "Ministers must seize the opportunity of the Levelling Up White Paper to make sure the government's 'Plan for Growth' supports the creation of globally-competitive industry clusters in every part of the UK.

"Otherwise, we risk the continuation of a lop-sided, centrally-led, interventionist growth policy which only serves to hamstring our localities from achieving anything like their inherent place potential."

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Press enquiries:

Jonathan Werran, chief executive, Localis

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

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Notes to Editors:

1. **An advance copy of the report is available for download**

A Plan For Local Growth

and is available as an Executive Summary

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

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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