

# DEVOLUTION DECLARATION

## A MODERN STATE FOR A STRONGER BRITAIN



@corecities #devodeclaration

### Declaration for Devolution MAY 14TH 2015

On 14 May 1787, the first-ever Constitutional Convention began in Philadelphia, setting out bold, ambitious powers for a new kind of modern state in America.

Two hundred and twenty-eight years to the day here in the UK, we call for a similarly ambitious approach to modernisation of our state system, to set cities and other places free to deliver growth and prosperity for the country.

Our offer to the country and the Government is clear, bold and deliverable. Anyone who is serious about economic growth and deficit reduction should immediately enter a dialogue with us. We want to work with the Government to shape a new, modern state fit for today's local and global challenges – one that can succeed at every level: from the international, to the neighbourhood and at all levels in between.

A state that can **Rebalance, Reform and Renew Britain**. Only by working together nationally and locally in a different way can we transform the lives of millions and ensure our country can compete in an increasingly globalised and complex world. The groundwork has been done, the model tested. Now is the time for more radical action.

#### REBALANCE

Grow the whole of the UK economy, contributing to the elimination of the deficit, for example by generating the potential £222 billion and 1.16 million extra jobs across the eight English Core Cities alone by 2030, which independent forecasts demonstrate is possible with more devolution. That's the equivalent of adding Denmark to our economy.

#### REFORM

Improve outcomes – but also reduce costs – through better local co-ordination of funding and services, focusing on people and place, and aligning local and national services, for example by integrating health and social care and wrapping services around individuals and families, raising productivity and getting more people into work and training.

#### RENEW

Revitalise democracy across our cities, for example by devolving down to communities, putting decision making in local hands, lessening social tensions, and restoring faith in our institutions by giving people a major say in how their taxes are spent on the issues that affect them.

This isn't a political pipe dream. Devolution is happening now, in communities large and small across our great nation. Our cities and their surrounding areas are starting to flex their muscles and gain new freedoms, but we have barely begun to tap into their potential.

To do so we must go further to modernise a system that has made the UK one of the most centralised states in the developed world, with the biggest economic disparity between its regions in Europe.

A system that means our cities and the places around them largely under-perform by international standards and cannot provide locally-tailored solutions to the issues facing millions of people today.

A system that now needs to see our places as the solution, not the problem.

Devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland continues, raising important questions for England. However, this will not unlock the massive economic potential of cities and other places across the UK.

The international evidence is clear: devolution below the level of nation states is critical to address the urgent challenges of driving prosperity, increasing equality and strengthening democracy, as we set out in our Modern Charter for Local Freedom. All cities must be freed from unnecessary central controls – Westminster, Holyrood, Cardiff Bay or Stormont.

The new Government has a historic opportunity to make a break with the past and create a better Britain.

We are passionate about our places and their potential to make a difference. We can help you deliver for our country and its people. Work with us to make this happen.

## THE WAY AHEAD

Detailed proposals for devolution packages have been drawn up. These should be supported for those who want it and can demonstrate they will deliver, including the following priority areas.

**Skills and jobs.** Locally tailored skills provision to meet the needs of business and get more people into the jobs they train for. Locally commissioned welfare-to-work programmes bringing more people out of unemployment and helping them stay in work.

**Transport.** Devolved and integrated long-term transport funds, with powers to deliver an improved, joined-up local transport offer, shaping local bus services, local rail policy and integrated smart ticketing.

**Business, trade and investment.** Fully, locally integrated business support, trade and investment budgets and services to simplify and get more return per pound of investment.

**Housing.** Freedom to decide how housing funds are best spent locally, to a locally agreed plan to increase housing numbers, matching our economic potential, and unblocking challenges unique to cities.

**Planning.** Freedom to create a statutory spatial strategy for city regions, linked to economic plans, and managing land to maximise growth and development.

**Low carbon and energy:** Greater freedom to deliver local energy solutions, supported by better infrastructure planning and stability in national energy policy. Joint work to deliver a resilient economy.

**Public Sector Reform.** Freedom to join up services locally to deliver better outcomes, including Early Years, Complex Families, and Health and Social Care integration, through 'place-based budgets'.

**Policing.** The freedom to take responsibility for policing into locally determined governance structures.

## Fiscal reform

Places that want it and meet the criteria should be able to retain the proceeds from selected taxes, including property taxes and a percentage of income tax, investing to create growth and jobs as well as improving delivery of previously centralised services. With more local control over resources, policies for growth will link to service reforms, strengthening economies, creating jobs, and saving public money.

We also need a mature national debate – in consultation with business and local communities – on how we can fully devolve some taxes into local control over the long term, within a system that redistributes resources and doesn't disadvantage places that don't have a strong tax base to start with.

## COUNTDOWN TO DEVOLUTION: IMMEDIATE ACTION FOR A BETTER BRITAIN

- 1 Enabling legislation for devolution should be included in the 2015 Queen's Speech, to commence in the first Parliamentary session and allowing for different governance structures in different places.
- 2 An Independent Devolution Commission should be created to support a transparent and robust programme, with a presumption in favour of devolution and calling the Government to account.
- 3 A place-based Comprehensive Spending Review should seek to deliver integrated and devolved budgets for specific sets of services across a place, taking into account the relationship between public service reform, economic development, sustainable city-led growth, and deficit reduction.
- 4 A process to determine how much broader fiscal retention and devolution can operate should begin at the same time as the CSR, with forerunners operating within the next Parliamentary period.
- 5 Although there may be a Constitutional Convention, action on devolution should not be delayed.

We base these proposals on evidence. Reports on how policies will operate can be found at [www.corecities.com](http://www.corecities.com)