



PRESS RELEASE

Former Ministers propose radical English devolution

Two former Cabinet Ministers are making radical proposals to give English local government new powers, resources, and status, and to extend effective devolution to all parts of England. Sir David Lidington, former de facto Deputy Prime Minister, and Professor John Denham, former Labour Communities Secretary, will present the plans at the Institute for Government on Wednesday 15th May. A draft Parliamentary Bill, also being published, places English devolution on a clear, statutory basis and gives English local authorities a role in shaping devolution policy.

The proposals would:

- Create a statutory National Devolution Framework setting out the powers and resources available to all upper tier local authorities (county, metropolitan borough and unitary councils) and combined authorities.
- Make English local government a statutory partner with central government in developing the National Devolution Framework by creating, in law, a representative body of combined local authorities covering England.
- Enhance the role of upper-tier local authorities in devolution by ensuring that they can access new powers and resources.
- Strengthen both new and existing combined authorities by ensuring that they can exercised economic development and other powers over a larger sub-regional geography.
- Require upper-tier authorities and combined authorities to devolve their own powers, where appropriate, to district councils, town/parish councils and local communities.
- Establish new local accounting officers, a new audit service and local public accounts committees to guarantee robust scrutiny and accountability.

The authors will argue that ‘the major parties recognise that England is too centralised. While real progress has been made through Mayoral Combined Authorities, it has been too slow and the powers and resources devolved are too limited and vary widely.

‘Devolution policy should be made jointly with England’s local government, not left to the discretion of central government and Whitehall. The current ad hoc system should be replaced by a legal framework for powers, resources, and accountability.

‘Powerful combined authorities are essential to regional economic development and should be established across England. Both new and existing combined authorities would be able to gain additional powers and resources

‘Our proposals would also revitalise existing upper-tier authorities by devolving additional powers to them and enhancing their role in creating, shaping, and leading combined local authorities.

‘Our draft Bill will demonstrate that it is quite feasible to legislate for this necessary enhancement of the status of English local government.’

Notes to editors:

- Details of the proposals are contained in a pamphlet entitled ‘The Local Governance of England’ and, together with the Draft Local Government (England) Bill, are being published by the cross-party Constitution Reform Group as a contribution to debate.
They are available at www.constitutionreformgroup.co.uk
- Phone numbers
 - o John Denham – 07973 273595
 - o David Lidington – 07921 039873
 - o Shana Fleming – 07912 032425
 - o Alexander Walker – 07402 703204
- To join the launch event virtually, see the Teams link below

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