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# English devolution and local government reorganisation

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01

# Local Government Reorganisation

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# The White Paper

- Programme LGR for all remaining two tier areas, plus smaller or failing unitaries
- Areas need to be 500,000 + but can be exceptions
- Proposals from areas
- Priority areas will be those where LGR can 'unlock' devolution
- Timetable unclear – Nov proposals, prep through 2026, and in existence 2027
- Funding likely to be available
- Possible postponement of 2025 elections

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# Legislation

- Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
- S2 – SoS can invite proposals from Principal Authorities
- Proposals can include:
  - Single tier for whole county area (Type A)
  - Single tier for local government for one or more districts within the county (Type B)
  - Single tier for one of above, plus relevant adjoining areas (Type C)
- Power of direction to be re-introduced
- Consultation required with any LA affected who did not make the proposal, and such other persons as SoS think appropriate
- Sos can implement a proposal with or without modifications
- SoS may seek advice from Boundary Commission but not required to

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02

# English Devolution

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# The White Paper

- Universal coverage of Strategic Authorities is the aim
- Foundation, Mayoral, Established
- 1.5m + people
- Functional economic areas, contiguous boundaries other SAs, no devolution islands, have an identity, be aligned other public sector boundaries where possible
- Priority Devolution Programme – elections May 2026
- Criteria for becoming Established:
  - Have been in existence for 18 months
  - Have published a Local Assurance Framework
  - Not subject to a Best Value notice etc

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# The White Paper

- No material accounting concerns; and,
- Track record of managing major programmes
- Integrated settlements
  - Single mutually agreed outcomes framework
  - Monitored over a spending period
- English devolution bill
  - Direction to be introduced
  - Introduction of powers and governance framework
  - Simple majority voting

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# Legislation

- Local Democracy, Economy and Construction Act 2009/Levelling up and Regeneration Act 2024 for CA's and CCA's respectively
- CCA's will be the vehicle in two tier areas, but constitution will need to change when LGR happens underneath
- Two possible processes for creation of CCA's:
  - Process used to date:
    - Proposal created by LA's and consulted on by them
    - LA's then need to submit proposal to SoS with consent of all LA's
    - SoS can make Regulations which implement proposal, or variation on it
  - Likely process:
    - SoS can carry out a consultation without a proposal
    - SoS can then make Regulations which create a CCA



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# Legislation

- New powers and governance framework not likely to come into effect under English devolution bill until 2027, but will take a standard approach in Regulations creating SA's.
- Timetable for new SAs in May 2026

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03

# Key considerations

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# Legislation

- Sequencing
  - Government priority is devolution except where LGR will unlock devolution
  - Do currently need consent of upper tier councils for creation SA, so lack of agreement could be barrier
  - Twin tracking?
- Size and Geography
  - 500,000 and 1.5m
  - If not of size then other compelling reasons
  - Close gaps in geography for CCAs
  - Join existing SAs?
  - For LGR, bring in areas adjacent, or part of areas

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# Legislation

- Consent and consensus
  - Govt will prefer areas where there is consensus
  - LGR does not require consent whereas SAs do
- Government approach and priorities
  - Priorities creation of SAs
  - Likely to prioritise areas with consensus and who will work at pace

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04

# The next phase...

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## Other considerations

- Moving beyond thoughts of mechanisms for creation...
- What will make the different tiers of Government work?
- Think of this as three tiers of government which all have to deliver at each level, and operate together as well as separately:
  - Strategic authorities – delivery of strategic functions including planning, development, transport, public health. Geography which makes sense for these things matters.
  - Local authorities – single tier delivering all functions – if creating smaller geographies might there still be things which work at the old county levels – or might there be benefit to running some services at the same geography as SAs?
  - Parish councils – some areas are doing governance reviews due to wanting government closer to people

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## Other considerations

- What makes all of this work?
  - Relationships drive successful outcomes.
  - Facilitation powers of Mayors are likely to be key
  - Delivery of services at the right level will require co-operation
- Delivery teams
  - Councils working together on transition to SAs/LGR
  - Will be a significant role for a number of people
  - Project management
- Transition phase
  - Protection of delivery of services
  - Delivering in a way which doesn't undermine the new structures

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05

# Conclusion



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# Conclusion

- Much is still uncertain
- Lots of change happening at once
- Questions around cost, capacity, and timings
- Political aspects confuse further
- But this is coming
- Early adopters will likely have an advantage
- Being agile and flexible is likely to be a winning formula
- Relationships will be key

# Thank you

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