

POLICY DIGEST, September 2015

This digest presents a summary of the latest policy developments at a national and regional level of strategic relevance to Northumberland and highlights Government announcements of relevance to local government. This issue covers period from Monday 31 August to Friday 2 October. Previous and subsequent editions are available at www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy.

Policy Development	Action	Lead
PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY		
<p>Landmark devolution bids submitted from right across the country (11 September 2015)</p> <p>The most radical shake up of local governance in a generation has taken a giant step forward this week with 38 landmark devolution proposals from cities, towns and counties across the United Kingdom being made to government. Each area has submitted ambitious proposals to take control of how public money is spent in their local area, the Prime Minister announced. Earlier this summer the Chancellor asked areas to put forward proposals to follow in the footsteps of Greater Manchester's ground-breaking devolution deal with government last year. The volume of bids clearly demonstrates the significant appetite to be part of a devolution revolution across the country, with local leaders signing up in droves to the Chancellor's vision of an accountable elected mayor leading strong regional areas who look after their own affairs. Bids have come in from the length and breadth of the country including Liverpool City Region, the North East, Gloucestershire and the West Midlands. The 38 bids received ahead of the deadline last Friday include the application for powers in a wide range of spending areas including education, transport, healthcare, housing and business support.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/landmark-devolution-bids-submitted-from-right-across-the-country</p>	For information	
PLACE SHAPING		
<p>£1.2 million improvements for A1 near Berwick (7 September 2015)</p> <p>Drivers will soon benefit from £1.2 million worth of improvements on a five mile stretch of the A1 near Berwick, Northumberland. Highways England will begin work on a project to resurface the section of road from the B6525 Oxford junction to Scremerston, where the A1 meets with the A1167 on Tuesday 15 September. Thirteen road signs will also be replaced, as well as road markings and 425 road studs, as part of the scheme which will require a temporary 40mph speed limit through the roadworks.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/12-million-improvements-for-a1-near-berwick</p>	For information	

<p>£1.5 million studies to explore Northern transport schemes (15 September 2015)</p> <p>Two studies worth over £1.5 million are to be carried out into new transport schemes to address some of the biggest road challenges in the North of England. Highways England has appointed companies to investigate the options to improve east to west links between the M6 in Cumbria and the A1(M) in the North East and major transport improvements to alleviate congestion on the M60 and M62 between Trafford and Bury – one of the busiest stretches of motorway in the country. WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff, which has been awarded a £500,000 contract, will lead a joint venture of companies, including Halcrow, TRL and Steer Davies Gleave. They will examine the case for turning the A66 or A69, or both roads, into dual carriageways as well as making other improvements along their length. Arup has been awarded a contract worth just over £1 million to consider how the transport network to the northwest of Manchester could be improved, including the M60 from junctions 8 to 18 and the M62 from junctions 9 to 12. The study will examine both road and public transport improvements.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/15-million-studies-to-explore-northern-transport-schemes</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning, Economy and Housing
<p>Total transport authorities: A new deal for town and rural bus services</p> <p>England needs a new settlement for buses and other forms of sustainable public transport. This report from IPPR makes the case for creating 'total transport areas' spanning multiple local authority geographies, which should take charge of all transport-related funding and regulatory powers in order to sustain and improve vital bus services in our towns and rural areas. Beyond London, bus services have been decimated by a vicious cycle of falling patronage, rising fares and cuts to services, a process exacerbated by severe cuts to both local authority budgets and subsidies for bus companies. This has left many people. This report proposes a new settlement for buses and other forms of sustainable public transport. Its recommendations build on the government's successful 'total transport' pilots, which support initiatives that take a 'cross-sector approach to the delivery of supported public road passenger transport services', and which go with the grain of moves to devolve greater powers to city- and county-regions. It also provides an overview of successful initiatives from across the country that have taken important steps towards a 'total transport' approach to bus services.</p> <p>http://www.ippr.org/publications/total-transport-authorities-a-new-deal-for-town-and-rural-bus-services</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
ECONOMIC PROSPERITY		
<p>Chancellor opens book on Northern Powerhouse investment opportunities in China (24 September 2015)</p> <p>The Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, showcased a selection of £24 billion worth of investment opportunities in the North of England with senior Chinese investors. Speaking in Chengdu, the Chancellor said there are unprecedented opportunities for Chinese investment into the Northern Powerhouse. Infrastructure and regeneration investment projects such as the Atlantic Gateway – a series of projects connecting the Port of Liverpool to the City of Manchester; and Science Central, a cutting-edge development in the heart of Newcastle, are set out in a new Northern Pitchbook. At the same time, Britain's great Northern leaders said a new wave of transformational Chinese investment can revolutionise Northern infrastructure.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-opens-book-on-more-than-24-billion-of-northern-powerhouse-investment-opportunities-in-china</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy

HEALTH & WELLBEING		
<p>Measures to ensure people receive fair pay announced (1 September 2015)</p> <p>The Business Secretary has announced a package of measures to ensure hardworking people receive the pay they are entitled to. The measures include: doubling the penalties for non-payment of the National Minimum Wage and the new National Living Wage; increasing the enforcement budget; setting up a new team in HMRC to take forward criminal prosecutions for those who deliberately do not comply; and ensuring that anyone found guilty will be considered for disqualification from being a company director for up to 15 years.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/measures-to-ensure-people-receive-fair-pay-announced</p>	For information	
<p>Dementia friendly communities: guidance for councils</p> <p>This guidance produced by the Local Government Association in collaboration with the community interest company Innovations in Dementia outlines the important role of councils in supporting people with dementia by creating local dementia friendly communities and demonstrates how councils are making this happen through case study examples.</p> <p>http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/publications/-/journal_content/56/10180/7415470/PUBLICATION</p>	For information	Jane Bowie, Head of Strategic Commissioning and Safeguarding
<p>Nottingham City Council energy company claims UK first (7 September 2015)</p> <p>A city council has launched what it says is the first local authority energy company in the UK. Officials of Nottingham City Council said they hoped Robin Hood Energy would take on mainstream suppliers. Three tariffs are on offer, one for city residents only, with claims many customers could save £200 a year. Councillor Alan Clark admitted there was a risk of the council losing money, but said the plan had passed all regulatory inspections. Robin Hood Energy was a not-for-profit business, said the council. It said the directors were not paid a salary and other employees did not receive bonuses. It differs from other arrangements as the council is acting as administrator and supplier buying directly from the grid, with no third party involved.</p> <p>http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-34171736</p>	For information	
<p>Further action taken to prevent energy bills rising (9 September 2015)</p> <p>Further measures to deal with the projected over-allocation of renewable energy subsidies have been announced by the Government. Keeping energy bills as low as possible for hardworking families and businesses is a top Government priority. Following a public consultation, the government has announced that they will be removing pre-accreditation for all new participants in the Feed-in Tariff (FIT) scheme from 01 October. Pre-accreditation allows a developer to lock in the subsidy rate well before major construction work or installation to acquire the necessary planning and environmental permits and grid connections has been completed. This means that although the subsidy level may have reduced by the time electricity begins to be generated, the developer will receive the higher subsidy agreed when the plant was in the planning stage but not guaranteed to go ahead. Removing this will provide better control over spending and ensure bill payers get the best possible deal.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-action-taken-to-prevent-energy-bills-rising</p>	For information	Alison Elsdon, Head of Corporate Resources

<p>English indices of deprivation 2015</p> <p>These statistics update the English indices of deprivation 2010. The English indices of deprivation measure relative deprivation in small areas in England called lower-layer super output areas. The index of multiple deprivation is the most widely used of these indices. Most of the data used for these statistics are from 2012 to 2013. The guidance note (above) explains how the index of multiple deprivation can be used, and expands on the headline points in the infographic. It also helps users navigate the various data files and documents available. The Government has also issued a statistical release which presents the main findings and background to the indices and a frequently asked questions document which includes information on a range of tools available to help you use the data such as the indices of deprivation 2015 explorer and other mapping tools.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015</p>	For information	Alison Elsdon, Head of Corporate Resources
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COMMUNITY SAFETY		
<p>Proposals for further emergency services collaboration announced (11 September 2015)</p> <p>Radical proposals to transform the way the police, fire and rescue and ambulance services work together have been unveiled by the Prime Minister. The Government has already invested over £70 million in collaboration projects and local areas have shown the benefits of joint-working between the emergency services – but there is more to be done to improve the way they serve communities, cut crime, save lives and provide value for money for taxpayers. The measures included in a consultation paper published today are: Encouraging collaboration by introducing a new statutory duty on all three emergency services to look at opportunities to work with one another better to improve efficiency and effectiveness; Enabling police and crime commissioners (PCCs) to take on the duties and responsibilities of fire and rescue authorities (FRAs), where a local case is made; Where a PCC takes on the responsibilities of a FRA, allowing them to create a single employer for police and fire staff so it is easier for them to share back office functions and streamline management; Enabling a PCC to be represented on their local FRA in areas where they do not take on the responsibility for fire and rescue services; Abolishing the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority and giving the Mayor or London direct responsibility for the fire and rescue service in London, as will be the case for the new Mayor of Greater Manchester; and Improving joint working between PCCs and NHS ambulance foundation trusts by encouraging trusts to consider PCC representation on their council of governors. It is important to note, however, that the proposals do not alter the important distinction between operational policing and firefighting. The law preventing a member of a police force from being a firefighter will remain in place and there is no intention to give firefighters the power of arrest. In addition, central government funding for the two organisations will continue to remain separate, as will council tax precepts, maintaining transparency for local taxpayers about how their taxes are spent on local services. The consultation closes on 23 October 2015.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/proposals-for-further-emergency-services-collaboration-announced</p>	Officers to consider feeding comments into the consultation	Alex Bennett, Chief Fire Officer

<p>Government launches air quality consultation (12 September 2015)</p> <p>The Government has launched a consultation to seek views from local and transport authorities, businesses and members of the public on what local action can be taken to improve air quality. Plans for how our great towns and cities can reduce emissions and create cleaner neighbourhoods and high streets have been released alongside a national framework that seeks to bring the UK into compliance with limits for nitrogen dioxide (NO2) in a number of areas by 2020 and in London by 2025. The plans released for consultation today outline how new, green technology can be exploited to create communities where people want to live and work, while boosting our growing economy and making Britain a world leader in low emission technology. Building on the success of similar schemes across the UK, the plans ask local authorities who are facing particular challenges to look at further action such as creating Clean Air Zones, introducing low emission buses and taxis, and using data to inform new road layouts. The consultation closes on 6 November 2015.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-air-quality-consultation</p>	<p>Officers to consider feeding comments into the consultation</p>	<p>Phil Soderquest Head of Public Protection</p>
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All issues are available at www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy