

POLICY DIGEST, January 2017

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 9 January 2017 to Friday 27 January 2017. Previous and subsequent editions are available at www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy.

Policy Development	Action	Lead
PLACE SHAPING		
<p>Accelerated construction: local authorities expressions of interest (3 January 2017)</p> <p>This prospectus invites expressions of interest from local authorities who want to see land developed by Accelerated Construction. Through this programme the Government wants to provide a tailored package of support to ambitious local authorities who would like to develop out surplus land holdings at pace. Within this, the Government recognises that there is no single approach to accelerated construction, and as such, their intention is to support a range of proposals at different scales and in locations where there is sufficient demand for housing. Expressions of interest must be submitted by 28 February 2017.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accelerated-construction-local-authorities-expressions-of-interest</p>	Officers to consider submitting an expression of interest	Paul Jones, Acting Director of Local Services and Housing Delivery
<p>Government allocates £1.2 billion roads funding to councils (13 January 2017)</p> <p>Transport Minister Andrew Jones has announced how the £1.2 billion local roads funding for the 2017 to 2018 financial year will be shared out across local authorities. The funding to improve roads, cut congestion and improve journey times includes money from the new National Productivity Investment Fund, announced in the Autumn Statement and the Pothole Action Fund. It also includes £75 million which councils can bid for to repair and maintain local infrastructure such as bridges, street lighting and rural roads. The government has also published further information about what the funding will be spent on - the latest step in the economic plan to stimulate the economy and build a country that works for everyone. A key part of this is putting in place improved transport links including better roads, to help people access work, school and services.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-allocates-12-billion-roads-funding-to-councils</p>	For information	Paul Jones, Acting Director of Local Services and Housing Delivery

<p>The State of Rural Services 2016</p> <p>This report, published by the Rural England Network, presents the most recent evidence regarding the provision of services to residents and businesses in rural England. It covers nine service areas, which are: local buses and community transport, welfare services, access to cash, further education, the retail sector, mental health services, older people's services, public health services and community assets.</p> <p>https://ruralengland.org/the-state-of-rural-services-2016-report/</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p>£64 million government funding to encourage more cycling and walking to work (26 January 2017)</p> <p>Thousands more people will be encouraged to cycle and walk to work thanks to a £64 million government investment, the Transport Minister Andrew Jones has announced. The funding will support local projects over 3 years from 2017 to 2020 and form part of a wider government package of more than £300 million to boost walking and cycling during the current parliament. By 2040 the government aims to make this part of everyday life and walking and cycling the natural choice for shorter journeys. The money will deliver: more safety and awareness training for cyclists; extra secure cycle storage; bike repair and maintenance courses; road safety measures; mapping information for pedestrians; real time bus information through smartphone apps or information at bus stops; and increased focus on car sharing clubs. The funding will also target those looking to get back into work because access to transport and the cost of travel often restricts where people can look for work and their ability to attend interviews. They will also benefit from discount bus travel and bike loans. The bid from the North East Combined Authority was unsuccessful.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/64-million-government-funding-to-encourage-more-cycling-and-walking-to-work</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY		
<p>£60 million tax reform to boost UK's digital revolution (13 January 2017)</p> <p>The UK's digital revolution is set to benefit from a multi-million pound boost, under plans announced by Communities Secretary Sajid Javid. A new Local Government Finance Bill will make it easier for companies to connect more homes and businesses across England to gold standard full fibre broadband and help get the UK ready for 5G by cutting the cost of laying the cables. Currently telecoms networks pay business rates on the fibre infrastructure needed to deliver high quality broadband and mobile connectivity to their customers. The Bill introduced in Parliament will give these companies a tax break for up to 5 years on the new infrastructure they lay for full fibre broadband – a saving of £60 million, which can be reinvested in this work. This new tax relief will not apply to existing infrastructure, giving companies an added incentive to move further and faster to get people connected to the best possible services as they become available. The move is part of a £1 billion package of measures by the government, announced at Autumn Statement 2016, to help communities get digitally connected.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/60-million-tax-reform-to-boost-uks-digital-revolution</p>	For information	Alison Elsdon, Director of Corporate Resources

<p>Communities set for cash boost to start new wave of action along Great British Coast (20 January 2017)</p> <p>A further 28 new Coastal Community Teams will be set up across the country. Coastal Communities Minister Andrew Percy has given seaside areas a cash boost and urged an army of activists to help revitalise our Great British coast. Mr Percy announced that a further 28 new 'Coastal Community Teams' will be set up across the country and tasked with producing radical economic plans which create jobs along the shore. Each team – made up of local volunteers, councils and local businesses – will receive an initial £10,000 each to develop a blueprint for economic growth and be offered support from a network geared towards regenerating our much-loved seaside areas. They will now join 118 existing teams who in less than 2 years have helped the seaside regain its position as the most popular overnight holiday destination for Brits – with a massive 13.7 million visits in 2015.</p> <p>Amble and Berwick-upon-Tweed are among the list of new Coastal Community Towns.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/communities-set-for-cash-boost-to-start-new-wave-of-action-along-great-british-coast</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p>PM unveils plans for a modern Industrial Strategy fit for Global Britain (22 January 2017)</p> <p>Prime Minister Theresa May has used her first regional Cabinet meeting to launch proposals for a modern Industrial Strategy to build on Britain's strengths and tackle its underlying weaknesses to secure a future as a competitive, global nation. At the heart of the strategy green paper is an offer to businesses to strike new sector deals, driven by the interests of firms and the people they employ, to address sector-specific challenges and opportunities. As part of the deals government will be prepared to offer a range of support, including addressing regulatory barriers to innovation and growth, looking at how we can use trade and investment deals to increase exports, or supporting the creation of new institutions to provide leadership, support innovation or boost skills. The Industrial Strategy is intended to drive growth right across the United Kingdom, using major new investments in infrastructure and research to drive prosperity – creating more high-skilled, high paid jobs and opportunities. The green paper also sets out plans to strengthen institutions in each part of the country to support their specific strengths – whether it's building up local trade bodies, or creating new educational institutions, making it easier for business to access finance outside London or getting a stronger business voice into local government. The green paper also sets out technologies where Britain has strengths in research and development which could be supported through the government's new Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, including: smart energy technologies; robotics and artificial intelligence and 5G mobile network technology. The consultation closes on 17 April 2017.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-unveils-plans-for-a-modern-industrial-strategy-fit-for-global-britain</p>	Officers to consider responding to the consultation.	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy
<p>Cash boost of £556 million for the Northern Powerhouse</p> <p>In tandem with the publication of the Industrial Strategy, the Government also announced the latest award of the Local Growth Fund (LGF) to areas within the Northern Powerhouse. This latest award of local growth funding is on top of £2.9 billion of Growth Deal funding already awarded to the 11 Local Enterprise Partnerships in the region – an investment which provides targeted financial support to locally-determined projects in order to unlock growth, help create jobs, and</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy

<p>support businesses. The additional £556 million will help do even more to benefit the lives of local people across the north. The North East LEP was awarded £49.7 million which will principally support the development of the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP) in Sunderland and South Tyneside, helping to creating an estimated 5,200 jobs.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/northern-powerhouse-growth-deals</p>		
--	--	--

HEALTH & WELLBEING		
<p>Prime Minister unveils plans to transform mental health support (9 January 2017)</p> <p>Prime Minister Theresa May announced a comprehensive package of measures to transform mental health support in our schools, workplaces and communities. She confirmed that true parity for mental and physical health can only be achieved if every institution recognises the vital role it can play in delivering this objective. The plans aim to make mental health an everyday concern for every bit of the system, helping ensure that no one affected by mental ill-health goes unattended. This includes: new support for schools with every secondary school in the country to be offered mental health first aid training and new trials to look at how to strengthen the links between schools and local NHS mental health staff; a new partnership with employers to improve mental health support in the workplace; further alternatives to hospital to support people in the community; plans to rapidly expand treatment by investing in and expanding digital mental health services; and new ways to right the injustices people with mental health problems face. The Prime Minister's announcement coincides with the publication of the Government's response to the work of the Mental Health Taskforce, which confirms that the Government will accept the Taskforce report's recommendations in full.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/five-year-forward-view-for-mental-health-government-response</p>	For information	
<p>Government backs Homelessness Bill with £48 million for councils (17 January 2017)</p> <p>Councils to receive further £48 million funding to help deliver new and expanded services to prevent and reduce homelessness. Councils are to receive a further £48 million funding to help them deliver new and expanded services to prevent and reduce homelessness, Local Government Minister Marcus Jones has confirmed. This new funding will be available to councils in England to meet the costs of the Homelessness Reduction Private Members' Bill, which if passed by Parliament, will mean anyone at risk of losing their home will get the help they need more quickly. Under the Bill, local authorities will be required to help all eligible people – whether they are single or a family - for 56 days before they are threatened with homelessness. Those who are already homeless will get support for a further 56 days to help them secure accommodation. Other services will also be required to refer homeless people or those at risk to local authority housing teams who can provide them with free information and advice services.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-backs-homelessness-bill-with-48-million-for-councils</p>	For information	Paul Jones, Acting Director of Local Services and Housing Delivery

STRONGER COMMUNITIES		
<p>The Cost of Disconnected Communities</p> <p>A new study, commissioned by Eden Project initiative The Big Lunch and funded by the Big Lottery, has found that disconnected communities could be costing the UK economy £32 billion every year. The research reveals that the annual cost to public services of social isolation and disconnected communities, includes: demand on health services: £5.2 billion (equal to the cost of building 70 new Specialist Emergency Care hospitals) and demand on policing: £205 million (equal to the median yearly salary of 6584 police officers). Disconnected communities are also linked to a loss of productivity, with a net cost to the economy of nearly £12 billion every year. According to the research, which was carried out by leading economics consultancy the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr), neighbourliness already delivers substantial economic benefits to UK society, representing an annual saving of £23.8 billion in total. This saving comes from sharing between neighbours, an increase in social connection and reductions in the demands on public services such as healthcare, social care, welfare and the environment. It also includes the productivity benefits associated with a happier and healthier workforce: a net gain to the economy of £6.4 billion, which is equivalent to 0.34% of UK GDP in 2015.</p> <p>https://www.edenprojectcommunities.com/the-cost-of-disconnected-communities</p>	For information	
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE		
<p>Funding for special educational needs support confirmed (10 January 2017)</p> <p>A multi-million pound package to support children with special educational needs and disability (SEND) has been announced. The Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families, Edward Timpson has confirmed funding from April 2017 of nearly £60 million. This funding will help embed the reforms made to the system of support for SEND and continue the support for the groups who have been instrumental in bringing about the progress seen to date. The funding announced includes: £15 million for the Independent Supporters programme in 2017 to 2018, run by the Council for Disabled Children, this has been a real driver of change for families navigating the SEND system and improving the experience for them; £2.3 million for Parent Carer Forums in 2017 to 2018, who bring parents together and provide a voice to influence local decision-making; and £1.8 million to Contact a Family, to support individual Parent Carer Forums and their National Network, and to run a national helpline for families. The package also includes funding for councils worth £40 million, which the minister wrote to them about shortly before Christmas. This investment, an increase of £4.2 million from last year (2016 to 2017) will support them to make effective plans for this important final year of the transition to the new SEND system.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/funding-for-special-educational-needs-support-confirmed</p>	For information	Andy Johnson, Director of Education and Skills
<p>Families to benefit from £50 million boost to childcare schemes (10 January 2017)</p>	For information	

<p>The Education Secretary Justine Greening has announced a £50 million grant scheme to provide thousands of new childcare places. The government has confirmed a list of successful projects benefitting from grants worth £50 million, which will help to deliver the government's landmark 30 hours free childcare offer. These confirmed projects will create almost 9,000 free places for eligible 3- and 4-year-olds, saving parents around £5,000 per year when it is rolled out from next September. Almost 200 nurseries and pre-schools will receive a share of this funding to invest in new buildings, convert old ones and upgrade facilities. Some of this funding will be invested in the Education Secretary's opportunity areas.</p>		
---	--	--

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/families-to-benefit-from-50-million-boost-to-childcare-schemes>

NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

***Policy Digest* is produced on 4 to 6 weekly cycle by the Council's Economic and Inclusion Policy Team
within the Planning and Economy Directorate**

All issues are available at www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy