

POLICY DIGEST, July 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 29 June to Friday 31 July. Previous and subsequent editions are available at www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy.

Policy Development	Action	Lead
PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY		
<p>Cornwall to be first county to gain historic new powers (16 July 2015)</p> <p>An historic devolution deal will for the first time, give Cornwall new powers to control local services, bringing jobs and prosperity to the area. As part of a major decentralisation in decision making, Cornwall will become the first rural county to benefit from devolution - gaining more control so it can set its own course to grow the local economy. The Cornwall devolution deal will: give Cornwall council powers for franchising and improving bus services in the area – the first rural unitary authority to gain this power; give the Local Enterprise Partnership more say on boosting local skills levels; give the council powers to select the projects, working with partners, it wants to see benefiting from millions of pounds of inward investment funding; make it easier for the Local Enterprise Partnership to integrate national and local business support services to help local firms grow; and enable the council to work with local health organisations on a plan for integrating health and social care services.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cornwall-to-be-first-county-to-gain-historic-new-powers</p>	For information	
<p>Spending Review 2015: A country that lives within its means</p> <p>These documents set out the government's approach to Spending Review 2015. 'It outlines the government's priorities for Spending Review 2015 and the principles that will guide its decisions. It also outlines the scope, process and timetable for delivering the Spending Review and announces that it will conclude on 25 November 2015.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2015-a-country-that-lives-within-its-means</p>	For information	

PLACE SHAPING		
<p>Highways England to carry out £600m major road improvements in the North East (1 July 2015)</p> <p>Highways England has revealed details of the £600m million investment which will take place in the region by 2020. Two major road improvements will be completed on the A1 and A19 in the next 5 years: adding an extra lane on a 4 mile stretch of the A1 between the Coal House junction, and the Metro Centre junction; and improving the A19/A1058 Coast Road junction by upgrading the existing roundabout to a three level interchange. Work will also begin on 4 schemes: constructing a flyover at the A19 Testos junction; junction improvements to A19 Down Hill Lane; A1 and A19 technology enhancement; and road widening on the A19 Norton to Wynyard section. In addition to this investment, work will continue on developing the 3 future schemes on the A1. These are A1 Morpeth to Ellingham dualling, A1 Scotswood to North Brunton and A1 Birtley to Coal House widening.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/highways-england-to-carry-out-600m-major-road-improvements-in-the-north-east</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Economy, Planning and Housing
ECONOMIC PROSPERITY		
<p>Learner drivers: Local authorities and apprenticeships</p> <p>This IPPR report investigates the crucial role that local government plays in shaping apprenticeships in their local economies and communities, and how this role can be consolidated and expanded to ensure the apprenticeships system delivers on its potential. At their best, apprenticeships serve two vital economic and social purposes: increasing productivity and promoting inclusion. A well-designed and high-performing apprenticeship system can help to resolve deep-seated problems of unemployment and inactivity, while at the same time driving up the skills of the workforce and its productivity. Too often, however, the current system is failing to realise its potential. On this basis, the report concludes that the underlying apprenticeships system needs to be reformed in various ways, in order to allow local authorities to maximise the value of apprenticeships within their local economies, for the benefit of apprenticeships and employers alike.</p> <p>http://www.ippr.org/publications/learner-drivers-local-authorities-and-apprenticeships</p>	For information	
<p>A Budget that delivers on our plan for working people in the North East (8 July 2015)</p> <p>Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne used his Summer Budget to set out the next stage in delivering on the government's plan for working people in the North East and to build the Northern Powerhouse. This Budget has delivered a tax cut for 1.1 million people in the North East, taken an additional 22,000 out of income tax all together, announced new opportunities for up to 220,000 apprentices and offers more childcare to working parents. Since 2010, there are 45,000 more people in work in the North East and 27,000 more businesses. Putting transport at the heart of his plans to take the Northern Powerhouse to the next level, the Budget also set out how the government will help working people at every stage of their lives. But there's more to do to and that's why, the Budget set out new investments in infrastructure, enterprise, skills and education to help deliver more jobs and investment in the North East.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/a-budget-that-delivers-on-our-plan-for-working-people-in-the-north-east</p>	For information	

<p>Multimillion pound boost for seaside towns (9 July 2015)</p> <p>Seaside towns across the country will have a chance to bid for £90 million of government funding under measures announced by the Chancellor in the Budget. Ministers welcomed the extension of Coastal Communities Fund to 2020 as part of the government's long-term economic plan to revitalise seaside towns and unlock their economic potential. Launched in 2012, the Coastal Communities Fund has already invested nearly £119 million on 211 projects local infrastructure and economic projects across the UK. This is helping to create almost 13,700 jobs and provide more than 10,280 training places and apprenticeships.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/multimillion-pound-boost-for-seaside-towns</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Economy, Planning and Housing
<p>Opportunities for places to benefit from Enterprise Zone boom (16 July 2015)</p> <p>Local councils are being urged to work with their Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to come forward with ambitious plans for new Enterprise Zones and to seize the economic initiative by identifying businesses on their patch with investment or export potential. This includes building on the commercial strengths of rural areas. Ministers want local business and civic leaders to encourage firms with shared interests to stand together and form a stronger commercial proposition. These new zones, if supported by a strong business case, will enable places to drive growth and jobs creation. Enterprise Zones bring with them a raft of benefits to businesses including lower taxes, access to superfast broadband and streamlined planning permission to boost local infrastructure.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/opportunities-for-places-to-benefit-from-enterprise-zone-boom</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Economy, Planning and Housing
<p>New plan to drive tourists beyond London (17 July 2015)</p> <p>The Prime Minister has announced the government's new Five Point Plan to boost tourism right across the UK - spreading the benefits of one of our fastest growing sectors beyond the capital, helping to create jobs and rebalance the economy. A new inter-ministerial group will be formed to co-ordinate and align action across government to ensure that we have the right infrastructure in place to make it easy for visitors to discover the best of what this country has to offer. The group, headed by the Culture Secretary John Whittingdale, and including ministers from across government, including the Department for Communities and Local Government, BIS, DEFRA, Home Office, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, will focus on five key areas: a better coordinated sector; skills and jobs; common sense regulation; Transport; and an improved welcome.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-plan-to-drive-tourists-beyond-london</p>	For information	
<p>Coastal Community Teams to take control of seaside (17 July 2015)</p> <p>Coastal Communities Minister Mark Francois has given his support to over 100 new local teams that will help revive England's seaside towns and decide where investment goes – including Blyth and Northumberland Coast AONB. The government has provided more than £1 million to fund 104 further Coastal Community Teams, on top of 12 existing pilots, to help bring jobs, growth and prosperity back to our beach towns and cities. The teams – bringing together local business, councils and people – will help coordinate regeneration projects in their area and get the chance to shape the next wave of the successful Coastal Communities Fund, announced in the Budget last week.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coastal-community-teams-to-take-control-of-seaside-regeneration</p>	For information	Geoff Paul, Director of Economy, Planning and Housing

<p>Additional £129 million boost for nationwide broadband rollout (30 July 2015)</p> <p>The Government welcomes BT's news today that the company will make up to £129m available to extend the Government led roll-out of superfast broadband. The funding will be made available to local authorities to reinvest the money in providing further superfast broadband coverage to even more homes and businesses and much earlier than originally planned. The money is being made available as a result of a clause in the contracts BT agreed with governments and local authorities that allows the funding BT has received to be returned or reinvested into further coverage if take-up is better than the 20 per cent expected in BT's original business case. The high take up rate to date has resulted in BT making a new business case assumption of reaching 30 per cent take-up in these areas.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/additional-129-million-boost-for-nationwide-broadband-rollout</p>	For information	Alison Elsdon, Head of Corporate Services
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HEALTH & WELLBEING		
<p>Government to strengthen child poverty measure (1 July 2015)</p> <p>Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Ian Duncan-Smith, has announced that the government will introduce a new and strengthened approach to tracking the life chances of Britain's most disadvantaged children. Improving people's life chances will be central to the government's 'one nation' approach to the next 5 years and ministers want a much more effective measure focused on the real causes of poverty. The current child poverty measure – defined as 60% of median income – is considered to be deeply flawed and a poor test of whether children's lives are genuinely improving. This was shown when the number of children in poverty went down significantly as the economy shrank during the recent recession, when in reality there was little change to those children's lives. The government will bring forward legislation to correct that with new measures focused on levels of work within a family and improvements in education attainment, 2 key areas in terms of improving social mobility.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-strengthen-child-poverty-measure</p>	For information	

COMMUNITY SAFETY		
<p>£3.2 million funding to help victims of domestic violence and abuse (9 July 2015)</p> <p>The government has underlined its commitment to support the victims of domestic violence and abuse through a £3.2 million fund to boost the provision of services including refuges. The fund will be open to proposals from local partnerships that demonstrate how the needs of victims could be met in innovative ways, working through collaboration and helping to address any gaps in the delivery of services in the short term. This announcement builds on the £10 million funding for refuges announced in March 2015. The Summer Budget 2015 also announced a review of the full range of services currently available to victims of domestic abuse. Its findings will feed into the Spending Review and an updated violence against women and girls strategy to ensure that victims of domestic violence and their families have access to the support and services they need to keep safe.</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/32-million-funding-to-help-victims-of-domestic-violence-and-abuse</p>	For information	Phil Soderquest, Head of Public Protection

<p>Fire Works – a collaborative way forward for fire and rescue services</p> <p>The fire and rescue service must reinvent themselves as a health and wellbeing service to survive the challenges of budget cuts, this new report from localism think tank NLGN argues. By adopting this radical new role, the fire service can help to support the NHS by keeping people out of hospital. The report, published in association with the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA), shows how fire and rescue services have driven a reduction in the number of fires which has resulted in calls by some for them to reduce their staffing levels. In the last decade the number of incidents has fallen by 40%, yet the number of firefighters has only fallen by 6%. To resist these calls, fire services must define a new role for themselves or risk becoming a residual service of reservists. NLGN argues that the law should be changed to give the fire and rescue service a formal role in helping older people to live independently and reducing attendance at A&E. They can also work with young people to reduce risky lifestyle choices.</p> <p>http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/2015/fire-service-must-make-radical-shift-from-fighting-fires-to-extinguishing-healthcare-costs/</p>	For information	Alex Bennett, Chief Fire Officer
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***Policy Digest* is produced on 4 to 6 weekly cycle by the Council's Economic and Inclusion Policy Team within the Planning, Economy and Housing Directorate**
All issues are available at www.northumberland.gov.uk/policy