News

Devon and Torbay devolution deal consultation now live *14/02/2024*

A six-week devolution consultation launched on 12 February with proposals to set up a Combined County Authority, a new decision-making body which would oversee new funds and powers transferred from Whitehall to Devon and Torbay.

Devolution Deal Proposal Key Benefits

- **Local priorities.** The Government is offering local decisions for local priorities and a stronger voice to influence future policy; proposing to transfer more power to Devon and Torbay to enable decisions to be taken locally on things that matter to local people such as building more affordable homes, improving public transport and investing in new quality jobs and skills.

- **Skills.** Local control of adult education to create up to 50,000 new training and retraining opportunities by 2030. Through Local Skills Improvement Plans, the Combined County Authority would work with councils, employers, colleges and universities to provide the quality jobs and skilled workforce our local economy needs.
- **Green economy**. Over £16 million of new capital funding to invest in new green jobs, homes, skills, and business growth and accelerate Devon and Torbay's transition to a net-zero economy, capitalising on our area's world-leading expertise in green science and technology. Funding will be made available to enable the development of crucial coastal and marine energy infrastructure. This will complement existing investments planned through the Levelling Up Funding in Northern Devon and Torbay, seeking to support innovation and investment across a crucial growth sector for the area.
- **Innovation.** Government and the proposed CCA will seek to maximise the strength of our area's core sectors such as the concentration of marine manufacturing in Northern Devon, specialist innovation assets and the potential of the Plymouth and South Devon Freeport; and the photonics sector within Torbay and Southern Devon, with over 100 companies coming together to support wider manufacturing, defence and digital supply chains.
- **Transport**. The proposed Deal builds on Devon County Council and Torbay Councils' long history of working well together on local transport planning. It would improve the efficiency and co-ordination of public transport. There is an ambition to introduce a single ticketing system for travellers and investment in services to provide greater access to public transport.
- **Housing**. A stronger partnership with Homes England, capitalising on the Affordable Housing Programme and Brownfield Infrastructure and Land Fund to create a joint action plan for affordable housing schemes and reduce homelessness. It includes additional land assembly and compulsory purchase powers and will facilitate greater Community Land Trust-led delivery.
- **UKSPF.** The Government is offering to transfer responsibility for planning and delivery of the area's £14.8 million UK Shared Prosperity Fund to Devon and Torbay from 2025 to support high growth business sectors such as advanced marine engineering, defence, photonics and digital and improve the look and feel of local communities with street and town centre enhancements.
- **Agriculture and fisheries.** The Government is offering a closer partnership with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs around the agritech and fishing sectors, a vital foundation of the local economy, but also areas of growing expertise around regenerative farming, net zero land management and aquaculture.

Governance

- **Not a mayor, not a unitary.** As a Level 2 area, the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority will be one of the first in the country not to feature a mayor or directly elected leader. No functions are being transferred to the CCA from any local authority in the area, other than the strategic transport functions of the County Council and Torbay Council with their agreement. What's proposed is a strategic authority led by local councillors representing Devon County Council and Torbay Council who will be responsible for overseeing new powers and funding transferred from Whitehall. As non-constituent members, Devon's district councils will have a voice on the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority along with the business and education sectors, and the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- **Councillor-led.** The proposed CCA will comprise six "constituent" Members, three councillors each, including the Leaders, from the County Council and Torbay Council. They will be joined by up to four "non-constituent" Members including two councillors nominated by Devon's District Councils to represent their interests on the CCA and two "associate" members nominated by the business and education sectors. The Police and Crime Commissioner will also be invited to attend to ensure alignment between the CCA and PCC. Constituent Members will be responsible for reserved matters such as the CCA's budget, policy framework and transport functions. The CCA will determine how it will deal with voting and decision-making between the CCA's membership on general matters, for example local policy and strategy making, as part of its broader Constitution.
- **Team Devon.** A Team Devon Joint Committee will be established to bring the County, District Councils, National Park Authorities and the Devon Association of Local Councils together. This will give the Committee a voice and establish a collective Team Devon position in the CCA. Costs will be off-set by the winding up of the Heart of the South West Joint Committee.

Set up and running costs

The Government is offering £1 million to fund the set-up costs of our proposed CCA. The CCA would make best use of existing council capacity and expertise to ensure running costs are minimised. The cost of the CCA will also be off-set by savings from the winding-up the Heart of the South West LEP whose functions (as they relate to Devon and Torbay) will be incorporated into the proposed new authority.

Plymouth

Plymouth City Council withdrew from the Deal because it did not wish to combine with Torbay and Devon County Councils as a single strategic Local Transport Authority delivering joined-up transport services. Whilst Devon and Torbay councils believe it is a mistake, they recognise and respect Plymouth's right to make its own decisions in this matter. The provisions of the proposed devolution deal leave the door open for Plymouth to apply to join the Combined County Authority in the future.

Where to go for information

From **Monday, February 12**, the Devon and Torbay Devolution Deal website (https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.devontorbaydeal.org.uk%2F&data=05%7C02%7Cpeter.doyle%40devon.gov.uk%7C0b8ac4e72a324f60a8ce08dc28c57175%7C8da1
will include FAQs, a consultation questionnaire, a summary of the Devolution Deal proposal as well as the full document. The website will include an

information leaflet and contact details for further information. The County Council and Torbay Council will be holding and attending a series of meetings across the area, supported by online sessions, for various stakeholders including the business and education sectors, along with meetings hosted by District Councils.

DALC is hosting an online Connect Event (https://devonalc.org.uk/events/connect-event-devolution-deal-devon-2/) on Tuesday 27 February, at 6pm, specifically for parish and town councils, to better understand the devolution proposals and ask questions. We encourage all parish and town councils to engage – your questions and comments will help shape DALC's own response to the consultation. This free event is open to councillors and officers.

Register to attend our Connect Event (https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZckfuGqrDsiGNLJtu3WTFu5GY-eZxvkP2S7#/registration)

Next Steps

On completion of the consultation, the County Council and Torbay Council will each consider all the responses and determine whether to submit a final proposal to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

If the Secretary of State is satisfied with the final proposal, he will introduce an Order in Parliament to create the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority with the consent of the area's councils.

The aim is for the Devon and Torbay CCA to be created during 2024.

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