

Jonathan Owen
Chief Executive
National Association of Local Councils



Q. What Next for Local Councils?

A. To become “local powerhouses” complementing and supporting the more strategic work of “northern powerhouses”, combined authorities and county deals.

Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill

- This will significantly change how England is governed with devolution of national services and more strategic cross service working around economic development, transport health etc. Including directly elected Mayors.
- This needs to be supported by “local powerhouses” linking the strategic with communities and delivering neighbourhood plans, joining up local devolved service delivery and promoting local housing and economic development
- If not there is the danger of a local democratic deficit, community disengagement and too much of a top down approach.

Fresh start, new Government

- Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Secretary of State DCLG, Tunbridge Wells
- Brandon Lewis MP, Minister of State, Great Yarmouth.
- Marcus Jones MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Local Government) Nuneaton
- Rt Hon Mark Francois MP, Minister of State (Housing) Rayleigh and Wickford, Essex
- James Wharton MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Northern Powerhouse), Stockton
- Baroness Williams of Trafford (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State DCLG)
- Rory Stewart MP, (Parliamentary Under-Secretary (DEFRA). Penrith and the Borders
- Rt Hon Oliver Letwin MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Cabinet Office) West Dorset
- New MPs too! And shadow teams



How can we grab this opportunity?

- More effective lobbying, nationally, regionally and locally
- Deliver!
- Build our capacity, at all levels
- Promote the sector, shout from the rafters!
- Build strong partnerships

Lobbying!



NALC's Manifesto



Stronger local democracy	Fairer funding	More powers
Make it easier to set up new parishes across England	Pass on Council tax support funding	Reform and simplify outdated laws
Create an improvement and development strategy	5% share of business rates	Right to be consulted and right to engage
Encourage more people to become Councillors	Share of community infrastructure levy, New Homes Bonus and underground exploration funding	Facilitate use of General Power of Competence – “right to innovate”
In return we will deliver local powerhouse – deliver neighbourhood plans, community rights, join-up local service provision, build strong communities		

Delivery!

- We already are! 40,000 councillors, 8 million “volunteer hours,” £2bn community investment
- 90% of Neighbourhood plans are parish lead
- Community Rights agenda
- Our Place pilots
- Taking over devolved services
- But we can do better and more consistently, learning from the best

Building Capacity

- We need to change too!
- Sector Improvement Strategy for clerks, councils and councillors, building on National Training Strategy
- Local Council Award Scheme
- Clustering and more shared services
- Precepts and investment

Promoting the sector

- Communications, Communications, Communications
- Tell local MPs, opinion formers and the public about the parish potential
- Local and National Press and media
- Digital Communications / new media
- Star Councils
- Encouraging people to stand for election

Build strong partnerships

- With each other
- With principal councils (NALC working with LGA)
- With other stakeholders including health, police, LEAs, BIDs etc
- With the public and the voluntary and community sectors

Conclusion

- Why should parishes become local powerhouses?
- This would lead to greater community buy-in, more devolved services, a huge leap in the number of neighbourhood plans and a boost to local economies of around £3bn in community investment
- It would embed devolution at all levels
- To achieve this we need to work together – councillors and clerks, NALC and CALCs and SLCC