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Response to Government consultation on Proposal to establish a combined authority

Local Consultation Report

1. Introduction

The seven Local Authorities in the North East (Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland) as the North East Leadership Board have been developing proposals to establish a more co-ordinated approach to important issues affecting the whole region such as transport, skills and attracting investment. The North East Leadership Board has been clear about its commitment to embed collaborative working arrangements in a statutory form and has engaged with key stakeholders throughout the development of the proposal for a Combined Authority for the area. This report summarises all of the consultation and engagement activity that has taken place from the Governance Review process through to the Secretary of State's consultation on the submitted proposals for a Combined Authority.

A Governance Review undertaken in April/May 2013 found that the creation of a Combined Authority for the area would improve the discharge of functions relating to transport, skills and economic development across the region. A consultation with regional stakeholders and key partners on the Governance Review found that there was overwhelming support for the establishment of a Combined Authority. Each of the seven local authorities consider that a Combined Authority would strengthen collaboration and enable strategic decision-making on economic growth and transport to be taken and endorsed the Governance Review and Scheme through their Cabinet/Executive and full Council.

As part of the legislative process to establish the new body and gain parliamentary approval, the Government must run a consultation to seek views on the proposed combined authority. The Government's consultation document specifically requests that the Local Authorities actively seek through such means as they consider appropriate the views of their residents, local businesses, and the voluntary sector with a view to providing the necessary evidence for Government to be satisfied about the degree of local support there is for a combined authority.

2. Summary of Responses

Over 500 stakeholders (including almost 400 residents) participated in the local consultation exercise. The majority of responses were received during the second period of activity in November/December 2013 through focus groups, stakeholder meetings and an online survey. An analysis of the responses is included in sections 4 and 5 of this report.

With regard to the overall proposal to establish a more coordinated approach across the area for important issues such transport, skills and inward investment the vast majority of responses were positive with 76% of respondents to the online survey in favour of achieving this through a combined authority. A review of the detailed comments identified key themes centred on efficiency of service delivery, the value of coordination across a larger area, the need for a single, coordinated and strong voice for the North East and the benefits that such an approach would bring for the area, its people and businesses.

Overall there is strong support for the proposed scope of the Combined Authority. Transport, skills, inward investment and the coordination of strategic funding are seen independently and, more importantly, collectively as key components for facilitating economic growth.

The majority of respondents felt that the geographical area proposed was appropriate in the context of the proposals however a number of respondents raised the question on why the Tees Valley authorities were not included in the proposals.

The consultation process has demonstrated a significant level of local support for the proposal to establish a combined authority in the North East and the comments and concerns raised by stakeholders will be noted as proposals are further developed, and on an ongoing basis as the new body is established.

3. Summary of process

The draft Governance Review and draft Scheme for a Combined Authority were initially consulted upon between 22 May and 11 June 2013. The key documents were published on each local authority website, alongside a list of FAQs and contact information for providing comments and feedback or requesting additional information. In addition, a letter was sent to key stakeholders enclosing the draft governance review and directly inviting them to respond to the proposals and to attend one of two workshop events hosted by the Leaders and Elected Mayor. All of the key stakeholders were also assigned a key point of contact within the local authorities with whom they could discuss the proposals in more detail and a number of 1-2-1 discussions also took place.

The partners engaged with as part of this consultation exercise included¹:

- The North East and Tees Valley LEPs
- Business and sector representative organisations (such as CBI, Chamber of Commerce, FSB, Developing Consensus and G9)
- The Tyne and Wear ITA and PTE (Nexus)
- Newcastle International Airport
- Regional Ports
- Universities

¹ A full list of the partners who were consulted is included at Appendix A

- FE Colleges
- The Skills Funding Agency
- SEMTA
- Trade Unions
- Relevant Government departments and agencies
- MPs, MEPs and Lords
- Regional Newspaper Editors

The North East Leadership Board has issued 6 press releases since agreeing to undertake a governance review in November 2012, providing updates on each stage of the process. Local media coverage has continued throughout this period raising awareness of the proposals among residents and stakeholders across the area.

During the summer of 2013 the region's media ran a co-ordinated campaign to lobby Government for devolution of power, responsibility and resources to the North East. The 'NEvolution' campaign was specifically focused on the skills agenda, transport and funding for growth (including European funds) in full alignment with the proposed focus of the combined authority.

Following submission of the Governance Review and draft Scheme to the Department for Communities and Local Government, and publication of the Secretary of State's consultation on the proposals, the North East Leadership Board initiated a second local consultation aimed primarily at residents which ran from 26 November to 12 December 2013. An online consultation² was published on each local authority website alongside the relevant key documents, and a number of focus group sessions took place covering all of the local authority areas. Letters were sent to regional and local stakeholders to raise awareness of both the Secretary of State's consultation and the local online survey. 378 responses were received to the survey (284 of which were from residents), 12 focus groups took place involving a total of 112 people and a range of local stakeholder meetings were held across the area. The full range of activity enabled engagement with residents, political representatives, business representatives and members of the voluntary and community sector.

Information arising from the local and regional consultation activity across 6 of the local authorities was available at the time of circulation and feeds into this consultation report, which will accompany the joint consultation response from the seven local authorities. The report will be updated to include the information from the local exercise in Sunderland before it is finalised.

4. Responses

4.1 Governance Review Consultation – May/June 2013

19 formal written responses were received during the initial period of consultation in May/June and most of the key stakeholders listed at Annex A were engaged through 1-2-1 meetings or stakeholder events. The response during this consultation period and through the engagement that has taken place subsequently has been overwhelmingly in support of creating a Combined Authority for the North East. Stakeholders have welcomed the proposal to strengthen collaborative arrangements across the seven local authorities through a democratically accountable, stable and long term governance structure for the wider area with a clear focus on enabling economic growth. Stakeholders have noted that the turmoil of

² A copy of the online consultation is included at Appendix B

economic governance at the sub-national scale in England has put the North East at a disadvantage and that the Combined Authority in conjunction with the North East LEP and a number of key partners can create the right framework to harness the energy of all involved to take advantage of opportunities in the area. Stakeholders feel that the case for the Combined Authority being established focusing on skills, transport and economic growth is clearly set out and these are the right priorities in the current climate.

The results of the consultation were detailed in the report considered by each Cabinet/Executive and Council in agreeing the final governance review and scheme. The relevant section of the report detailing the results is attached at Annex C.

4.2 North East Independent Economic Review (NEIER)

In 2012 the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) board which includes the seven Local Authority Leaders/Elected Mayor, asked a team of leaders from finance, industry, public and civil society to produce a strategic and constructively critical view of the North East economy. The North East Independent Economic Review (NEIER) report was published in April 2013 and offers an agenda for NELEP and its partners, reflecting the commitment of the seven Local Authorities to strengthen collaborative working arrangements and strategic decision making across the area.

The NEIER review process was led by an independent review panel and supported by a number of international experts. The review was taken forward in a series of stages which included a summary of existing evidence and research, evidence gathering and stakeholder engagement, the production of a series of think pieces and a number of review panel sessions with a wide range of stakeholders from different sectors. The evidence was presented to a large stakeholder audience at the NEIER Evidence Base Conference in February 2013 and a number of launch events were held in April 2013. In addition, the 'Driving Forward Economic Growth Conference' in September 2013 concentrated on the progress made since the launch of NEIER in April 2013 and the next steps moving forward in delivering a single growth strategy. At each of the conferences and the launch events, which were attended by hundreds of key stakeholders from across the area, the North East Leadership Board set out the ambition and rationale for strengthening the collaborative arrangements across the seven local authorities in the NELEP area.

In addition to wide consultation on the NEIER - which itself endorses the creation of a Combined Authority for the area - through the wider NEIER process the concept of a Combined Authority was strongly supported by a number of key stakeholders. A number of responses to the NEIER including those from the North East CBI, the National Housing Federation, the Homebuilders Federation and the Northern Housing Consortium, and also Developing Consensus (which represents the region's leading property investors, developers and professional advisors), welcomed the proposals by the Leadership Board.

4.3 MPs, MEPs and Lords Event – 29 October 2013

An event was also hosted to engage regional MPs, MEPs and Lords in the Combined Authority development process and the wider agenda for growth being articulated through the European Structural and Investment Fund Strategy and the Strategic Economic Plan.

Over 20 MPs and Lords attended the event and overall there was strong support for the decision to form a Combined Authority for the North East, and the Leadership Board were congratulated on the collaborative work that has taken place so far to progress the

proposals. MPs and Lords also offered their support with any issues regarding the process and timetable.

Transport and connectivity featured strongly in the discussion and the comments received in relation to priorities for the North East. The group felt that Transport and connectivity should be embedded into the priorities of the CA, and that the North East really needs a transport system to help people get to jobs wherever they might be in the region. This was felt to be particularly important for rural areas where it is necessary to get people into hubs of employment and training. MPs and Lords emphasised that it was a good move from the seven local authorities to work together and recognised that there would be challenges and pitfalls along the way.

4.4 Public Consultation – November/December 2013

During the second period of consultation in November/December 2013 the online consultation received 378 responses (284 of these (75%) were from residents) and 112 people took part in 12 focus group sessions.

Quantitative responses

The online survey was prefaced with introductory text that provided a high-level summary of information about the North East Leadership Board and the proposal to strengthen their joint arrangements through a combined authority. This text also provided links to more detailed information about the proposals. The survey and introductory text is attached to this report at Appendix B. The results of the online consultation were as follows:

- **76%** of respondents agreed that a more co-ordinated approach will help to improve the provision of economic development and regeneration within the seven local authority areas.
- **74%** of respondents agreed that a more co-ordinated approach will help to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of transport within the seven local authority areas.
- **65%** of respondents agreed that a more co-ordinated approach will help to improve the overall economic conditions within the seven local authority areas.
- **76%** of respondents supported the proposal to establish a more co-ordinated approach as described in the introductory text.
- **73%** of respondents agreed that the local authority areas involved in this approach should be made up of Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland.
- **64%** of respondents agreed that the focus of a more co-ordinated approach should initially be transport, skills and economic growth only.

Qualitative Responses

Qualitative responses were collected through the online survey, focus groups, stakeholder meetings and a central email address. The same questions were used throughout the consultation exercise to ensure consistency across all methods. The list of stakeholders engaged with during the second period of consultation are listed at Annex D.

Overall Proposal to strengthen coordination through a Combined Authority

In relation to the overall proposal to establish a more coordinated approach across the area the vast majority of responses were positive. The key themes of the responses centred on efficiency of service delivery, the value of coordination across a larger area, the need for a single, coordinated and strong voice for the North East and the benefits that such an

approach would bring for the area, its people and businesses. Concerns raised focused on fears of increased bureaucracy and added layers of government and also the risk that not all areas would be adequately represented.

Some key points that came out strongly in the responses include:

- The North East Leadership Board will promote and deliver growth and employment whilst better coordination of transport and economic related activities will significantly benefit the area.
- The area requires a combined approach in order to obtain long term benefits for the whole region in order to grow and develop. Local coordination rather than competition is the best course for the North East. A joint approach to regional issues will be beneficial and significantly more efficient in terms of tackling strategic issues that have an impact on all areas.
- The North East lags behind the rest of the country on jobs, employment, investment, living standards and life expectancy. As spending cuts in the North East are disproportionate to the rest of the country, a closer working relationship between the local authorities can only be a positive move in helping to increase opportunities to overcome economic challenges.
- The region needs to work together creatively and imaginatively to help it and its communities achieve their full potential. Working together, the Leadership Board will have the opportunity to combine efforts and have a strong voice and vision for the region.
- The proposal will help to ensure that the North East becomes more competitive in seeking external investment and a co-ordinated approach to transport and skills will be more effective.
- It is imperative that there is a strong, democratically accountable body responsible for overseeing and implementing a strategic economic plan for the NE Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) area, providing strong governance for the NELEP and maximising the potential for economic growth in the area.
- A single, coordinated and stronger voice will be better for working with relevant partners and negotiating with Government. People of the North East will be more effectively represented at national level by adopting a co-ordinated approach in the area. This will give greater autonomy to the North East to invest and spend funding in the best way to suit the needs of the area.
- Transport came out extremely strongly with respondents recognising that as travel patterns do not align to local authority boundaries, a combined approach will allow for much more flexibility and potential for internal tailoring of transport provision to meet the varying needs of the wider area's population
- Many decisions such as those on transport need to be considered at a wider level - not just a local authority level. A co-ordinated approach will help our areas provide a better, joined up offer to businesses wanting to invest in the area.
- A combined approach across the seven local authorities will improve services and create efficiencies through economies of scale. Joint working, sharing resources, skills and knowledge will help local authorities achieve more together than individually which is particularly important considering the financial pressures that local authorities are facing.
- Opportunities may be being missed as things currently stand which a Combined Authority could take advantage of.

- The North East has nothing to lose and everything to gain by presenting a united front. This part of the country is often over looked and misrepresented to and by central government.
- This is not an expensive proposal - there is no new 'tier' of bureaucracy but it gives the North East the power to organise an effective integrated transport system, attract businesses and create jobs, and ultimately improve standards of living and lifestyle.
- There should be no further expense to taxpayers and this should be delivered within the local authorities existing resources. However, it was also noted that lack of investment in this structure may limit the ambitions and ability to deliver on the issues which clearly need to be tackled.

Concerns raised through the consultation on the overall proposals include:

- The possibility that certain parts of the region will not benefit from funding and that rural issues in particular will not be considered and sufficiently addressed
- The perception that the proposals would mean another layer of management and bureaucracy at a time of austerity and Local Authority budget cuts.
- Concerns that government will not devolve the required powers and/or budgets, resulting in another layer of bureaucracy.
- The need for accountability of the Combined Authority to the electorate and scrutinising of decisions.
- Local Authorities should concentrate on management of their own areas, keeping decisions as local as possible and assist existing organisations such as NELEP
- Doubts on whether the Local Authorities can deliver any benefits
- A Combined Authority is the first step towards a regional authority
- How decisions will be made regarding where resources or investment are allocated.

Proposed Scope of the Combined Authority - Initial focus on transport, skills and economic growth

Overall there is strong support for the proposed scope of the Combined Authority. Transport, skills, inward investment and the coordination of strategic funding are seen independently and, more importantly, collectively as key components for facilitating economic growth.

Key comments include

- These are the biggest issues that cut across the remit of the local authorities involved, and are therefore a sensible place to start. Concentration on these areas will have the biggest financial impact on the region, and all three of these are intrinsically linked so need to be considered alongside each other, rather than in isolation.
- Areas do differ across the region and different local approaches need to be taken to address most issues however transport, skills and economic growth need to be considered in a joined up way and a more coordinated approach will benefit all local residents across the region.
- Respondents felt that overall these functions were the right ones for the Combined Authority to start with and that attempting to co-ordinate too many areas of local authority concern at once would be likely to stall the entire initiative.

- A significant proportion of respondents mentioned that economic growth should include a focus on culture & heritage and tourism.
- There were also calls for the approach to be rolled out to other functional areas once the Combined Authority is established. Recommendations from respondents were that education in particular was included and also housing - both seen as key areas that support economic growth and that need a form of regional coordination. Other suggestions for regional cooperation included tackling disadvantage and promoting equality; green infrastructure and biodiversity; and energy generation. Comments were also made that the CA approach should be the start of a process which leads to shared resources in a number of areas including health and emergency services.
- Concerns were raised about local delivery that will address the varying needs of North East communities especially in regard to transport. Reassurances were also requested around costs.
- Some respondents felt that local authorities should be working together on these areas without the need for a Combined Authority.

Geographical coverage

The majority of respondents felt that the geographical area proposed was appropriate in the context of the proposals however a number of respondents raised the question of why other areas, in particular the Tees Valley authorities, were not included in the proposals.

Key comments include

- The geographical area is based on a functional economic market area and it makes sense for consistency and alignment of strategy.
- This is a geographically coherent area with a strong sense of identity, a common culture, heritage and commitment and also a strong sense of place.
- Because the area is geographically and historically linked, the foundation is already in place to work together to improve employment, infrastructure and transport links for the region
- The seven local authorities do constitute a significant proportion of the population of the North East region and represent an area which is a coherent sub-national area in terms of economic development, regeneration and transport.
- Although there are differences in terms of the distinctiveness of different parts of this area, including urban and rural conurbations and disparities of wealth and economic performance, the local authorities have a deep understanding of the needs of the area, a strong track record of partnership working and delivery, as well as a significant amount of intelligence and research to provide evidence for what is required to make improvements.
- Concerns were raised regarding potential duplication with NE LEP and how the need of the rural authorities of Durham and Northumberland would be represented.
- Some respondents felt that the size is right and that adding more authorities would make it too big and reduce efficiency, whereas a considerable number felt that some or all of the Tees Valley authorities should be included in the proposals.
- A significant number of respondents agreed with the proposals for a Combined Authority but felt it would be much better if all twelve local authorities in the region were involved to provide a stronger voice and access to more opportunities for economic growth.

5. Conclusions

The seven local authorities have undertaken a wide range of consultation and engagement activity to obtain views on the proposals to establish a combined authority. This has generated over 500 responses from across a variety of sources including a wide range of public and private sector stakeholders, the voluntary and community sector and a large majority (almost 400) from members of the public.

Responses across the full range of stakeholders have been extremely positive, welcoming the progress made so far in deepening collaboration with wide support for further enhancing this through a combined authority. The high level of positive responses and feedback among members of the public who participated in focus groups and the online survey is of particular significance in demonstrating the extent of local support, and illustrates that the proposal reflects the identities and interests of local communities.

With regard to the **overall proposal to establish a more coordinated approach** across the area for important issues such transport, skills and inward investment the vast majority of responses were positive. The key themes of the responses centred on efficiency of service delivery, the value of coordination across a larger area, the need for a single, coordinated and strong voice for the North East and the benefits that such an approach would bring for the area, its people and businesses.

Overall there is strong support for the **proposed scope** of the Combined Authority. Transport, skills, inward investment and the coordination of strategic funding are seen independently and, more importantly, collectively as key components for facilitating economic growth.

The majority of respondents felt that the **geographical area** proposed was appropriate in the context of the proposals however a number of respondents raised the question of why other areas, in particular the Tees Valley authorities, were not included in the proposals.

The consultation process has provided clear evidence of significant local support for the proposal to establish a combined authority in the North East and the concerns raised will be noted as proposals are further developed and on an ongoing basis as the new body is established.

Annex A

Key stakeholders consulted in May/June 2013.

Association of North East Councils (ANEC)	
North East Local Enterprise Partnership	
Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership	
Tyne and Wear Integrated Transport Authority	
Nexus (Tyne and Wear PTE)	
Newcastle International Airport	
Newcastle Liberal Democrats Group	
Regional Newspaper Editors	
North East Farming and Rural Advisory Network (NEFRAN)	
TT2 Limited	
Tees Valley Unlimited	
Senta (North East)	
Universities	Durham
	Newcastle
	Northumbria
	Sunderland
Colleges	Association of Colleges
	NCG
	Bishop Auckland College
	Derwentside College
	East Durham College
	Gateshead College
	New College Durham
	Newcastle College
	Northumberland College
	South Tyneside College
	Sunderland College
	Tyne Metropolitan College
Government departments and agencies	Homes and Communities Agency
	Skills Funding Agency
Business and sector representative organisations	North East Chamber of Commerce
	CBI North East
	G9 Group
	Developing Consensus
	North East FSB
Trade Unions	TUC Northern
	Unison (Northern Region)
	GMB
	Unite
Ports	Berwick
	Blyth
	Seaham
	Sunderland
	Tyne
MPs	Sir Alan Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed)
	Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley)

	Guy Opperman (Hexham)
	Ian Lavery (Wansbeck)
	Alan Campbell (Tynemouth)
	Mary Theresa Glindon (North Tyneside)
	Chi Onwurah (Newcastle Central)
	Nick Brown (Newcastle East)
	Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle North)
	Ian Mearns (Gateshead)
	Dave Anderson (Blaydon)
	Stephen Hepburn (Jarrow)
	Emma Lewell-Buck (South Shields)
	Bridget Phillipson (Houghton and Sunderland South)
	Julie Elliott (Sunderland Central)
	Sharon Hodgson (Washington and Sunderland West)
	Roberta Blackman-Woods (City of Durham)
	Pat Glass (North West Durham)
	Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland)
	Kevan Jones (North Durham)
	Grahame Morris (Easington)
	Phil Wilson (Sedgefield)
MEPs	Martin Callanan (North East)
	Fiona Hall (North East)
	Stephen Hughes (North East)
House of Lords	Lord Andrew Adonis
	Baroness Hilary Armstrong
	Lord Michael Bates
	Lord Jeremy Beecham
	Lord Don Curry
	Lord Donald Dixon
	Lord Charles Falconer

	Lord Derek Foster
	Lord Brian Mackenzie
	Baroness Diana Maddock
	Lord David Puttnam
	Viscount Matthew Ridley
	Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson
	Baroness Joyce Quin
	Lord Redesdale (Rupert Mitford)
	Lord Tom Sawyer
	Baroness Maeve Sherlock
	Lord John Shipley
	Lord John Stevens
	Lord Nigel Vinson
	Lord John Walton
	Justin Welby
	John Wharton

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Online consultation – Introductory context and questions

Seven councils in the North East (Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland) have been working together, as the North East Leadership Board, to develop a more co-ordinated approach to important issues affecting the whole region such as transport, skills and attracting investment.

Their shared ambition is to create the best possible conditions for growth in jobs, investment and living standards, to make the North East an excellent location for business, to prioritise and deliver high quality transport infrastructure and to enable residents to raise their skill levels and to benefit from economic growth long into the future.

The North East Leadership Board is keen to join a number of other areas, including West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and Merseyside, in making their arrangements more formal by creating a legal body referred to as a 'combined authority'. This will ensure that the North East does not lose out on opportunities for greater decision-making powers, access to more funding from Government and is in a better position to collaborate on key local issues ([click here](#) for more details).

The combined authority will not replace individual councils, who will continue to deliver the vast majority of their services to local people.

A proposal has been submitted to Government which aims to formally establish the North East Leadership Board by April 2014. We would like your views which will be used by the seven councils in their response to a Government consultation about the proposal.

Questions

1. **Thinking about the seven local authority areas, do you agree that a more co-ordinated approach will help to improve...**
 - ...the provision of economic development and regeneration
 - ...the effectiveness and efficiency of transport
 - ...the overall economic conditions?
2. **Do you support the proposal to establish a more co-ordinated approach to important issues such as transport, skills and attracting investment?**
3. **Do you agree that the local authority areas involved in this approach should be made up of Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland?**
4. **Do you agree that the focus of a more co-ordinated approach should initially be transport, skills and economic growth only?**

Improving economic Governance in the North East Local Enterprise Area

Summary of Consultation Responses – June 2013

1. Consultation Process

The LA7 Leadership Board has been clear about its commitment to embed collaborative working arrangements in a statutory form and has engaged with key stakeholders throughout the process.

The partners engaged with as part of the consultation exercise included the North East LEP and Tees Valley LEP; business and sector representative organisations such as the CBI, the North East Chamber of Commerce, the FSB, Developing Consensus and G9; the Tyne & Wear ITA and Passenger Transport Executive – Nexus; Newcastle International Airport; the regional ports; Universities; FE Colleges; the SFA; SEMTA; the trade unions; relevant government departments and agencies; and of course MPs, MEPs and Lords.

These stakeholders have been sent information at key stages throughout the process and the LA7 Leadership Board have invited the views of partners and stakeholders on the draft proposals and the on-going engagement on the partnership approach to be established in the long run.

Following the publication of the draft proposals and the invitation for written responses, the LA7 Leadership Board also hosted two stakeholder engagement events, where partners together with a wider range of stakeholders, were encouraged to share their views on the draft proposals. All of the key stakeholders have also been assigned a key point of contact to discuss the proposals in more detail, with a clear view that engagement will be maintained moving towards establishment of the Combined Authority to finalise all the practical details. All of this activity has been supported by a comprehensive communications plan including press releases and detailed information available on all local authority websites. Complementary stakeholder engagement has also taken place with each local authority taking a lead on updating and consulting with staff, local union representatives, members and key local partners.

All of the consultation responses including written responses, key points raised at the stakeholder events and any points raised from one to one discussions with key stakeholders so far have been considered and addressed as appropriate in the final iteration of the Governance Review Report and the Scheme.

2. Responses

There is overwhelming support from stakeholders in favour of creating a Combined Authority for the North East. Stakeholders are welcoming the agreement by the seven local authorities to strengthen collaborative arrangements and set up a stable and long term governance structure for the wider area which is democratically accountable and has a clear focus on enabling economic growth. Stakeholders have noted that the turmoil of economic governance at the subnational scale in England has put the North East at a disadvantage and that the Combined Authority in conjunction with the North East LEP and a number of key partners can create the right framework to harness the energy of all involved to take advantage of

opportunities in the area. Stakeholders feel that the case for the CA being established focusing on skills, transport and economic growth is clearly set out and these are the right priorities in the current climate.

The LA7 leadership board has discussed the emerging proposals with stakeholders and has asked for partners to consider the correct framework that needs to be put in place for the combined authority in the areas of strategic funding, inward investment, skills and transport whilst also recognising that further work with key stakeholders will be needed over the coming months to transform this framework into the detailed working arrangements that need to be put in place.

Specific points that have been raised in regards to funding, inward investment, skills, transport and the wider partnership arrangements are summarised below.

2.1 External Funding

- The proposal to deliver a flexible responsive and joined up approach to funding opportunities by providing greater clarity and alignment of priorities is widely welcomed.
- A small streamlined management tier focusing on key issues like transport and having close control over the allocation of funding makes a great deal of sense in the current climate.
- The ability to obtain private sector funding is critical to the successful economic development of regions, independent access to funds and the availability of these funds for a prolonged period is necessary.

2.2 Inward Investment

- The unified voice of the CA will be extremely important for strategically positioning the North East, both nationally and globally.
- There are existing and upcoming opportunities that will be better targeted by a single inward investment body.
- The role of destination marketing and regional branding for the North East fits naturally with economic growth priority and this should include tourism
- A strong push is needed to market the region globally to drive demand needed for economic growth and jobs and the CA provides a good opportunity to make this happen.

2.3 Skills

- Colleges operate in a complex environment and feel they are 'fit for purpose.' There is commitment by providers to engage in a strategic conversation and joint action plan with local authorities and other partners to bring about the outcomes outlined in the draft proposals.
- The Colleges would in particular welcome the CA taking responsibility for providing robust market needs analysis and would find this useful in underpinning dialogue with students and key stakeholders as well as supporting college business plans. Additionally the CA should focus on addressing investment and information asymmetries.
- Welcome the opportunity to build upon existing employer relationships to increase the number of apprenticeships, tackle youth unemployment, create work experience opportunities and widen access to higher level skills by

collectively driving demand through existing channels using flexible and innovative models of delivery. This process is already taking place through the collaboration between the AoC Ne Skills Group and the North East LEP.

- New freedoms and flexibilities afforded to Colleges should not be reduced as a result of adding another layer of regulation through the proposed LA7 commissioning process.
- Colleges have been critical on proposals regarding commissioning and funding, highlighting that detailed engagement with providers will be needed to work out the details.

2.4 Transport

- An integrated transport system is welcomed with particular support for coordinating and prioritising strategic transport investment through a Joint Local Transport Plan.
- Any further development which will encourage the accessibility of the region both nationally and internationally is widely welcomed.
- It is essential that the LA7 operate as a Combined Authority with economic development and transport forming the central rationale with a focus on aviation, roads, ports and rail within an overall economic strategy.
- The infrastructure needs of the area need to be planned and developed over a sensible time scale with effective funding in place, the development of road and rail infrastructure together with investment in the ports and airports of the region are important and need to be addressed.
- The Combined Authority could lead to the 5 regional ports working better together on certain projects for the benefit of all.
- A CA with oversight of transport over the 7 LA areas has the potential to get a better appreciation and focus on the role of transport in the region's economy, and investment and service priorities than the current arrangements.
- The current consultation document and scheme provides the high level basis for an informed debate as to how the CA should practically take forward transport, but there are a wide number of important issues of detail which need to be considered and these should be addressed through a process over time.

2.5 Partnership working and practical arrangements

- The proposals which give the North East a strong collective voice and forum for addressing clear priorities are welcomed.
- The good work that is happening in the region at the moment should not cease whilst the CA is established.
- Delivering a coordinated stance towards the delivery of services, local leadership and sharing resources is exactly what the area needs.
- It is essential that there is a consistency of approach and a credible leadership. A three year appointment on an elected basis should be considered.
- The CA must form part of a wider structure which also secures key leadership functions for the business community and properly resourced LEP.

- The business community widely endorse the NEIER findings, in particular the proposed institutional arrangements setting out the key responsibilities for the CA and the LEP
- Keen to see the business voice in the North East inputting into the CA strands of activity. Having the NELEP chair as an observer on the CA board is welcome but it is vital there are clear mechanisms in place for a strong business voice on all thematic sub-groups and committees.
- The relationship between the CA and the LEP will be crucial moving forward.

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Regional Stakeholders	
Association of North East Councils (ANEC)	
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Tyne and Wear Integrated Transport Authority	
Nexus (Tyne and Wear PTE)	
Newcastle International Airport	
Newcastle Liberal Democrats Group	
Regional Newspaper Editors	
North East Farming and Rural Advisory Network (NEFRAN)	
TT2 Limited	
Tees Valley Unlimited	
Semta (North East)	
Universities	Durham
	Newcastle
	Northumbria
	Sunderland
Colleges	Association of Colleges
	NCG
	Bishop Auckland College
	Derwentside College
	East Durham College
	Gateshead College
	New College Durham
	Newcastle College
	Northumberland College
	South Tyneside College
	Sunderland College
Tyne Metropolitan College	
Government departments and agencies	Homes and Communities Agency
	Skills Funding Agency
Business and sector representative organisations	North East Chamber of Commerce
	CBI North East
	G9 Group
	Developing Consensus
	North East FSB
Trade Unions	TUC Northern
	Unison (Northern Region)
	GMB
	Unite
Ports	Berwick
	Blyth
	Seaham
	Sunderland

	Type
Local Stakeholders	

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ⁱ A list of local stakeholders is currently being compiled and will be added to the final draft of this report before submission.

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