



**Government Response to the House of Commons  
Communities and Local Government Committee Report  
of Session 2010-12: Regeneration**

Presented to Parliament  
by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government  
by Command of Her Majesty

January 2012

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## Introduction

1. Regeneration is an essential element of our approach to building a strong and balanced economy. A strong national economy depends on the strength and vitality of local economies across the country – we need every part of the country to fulfil its potential if we are to maximise national economic growth.
2. The Government has welcomed the Select Committee's inquiry. The debate has been timely, and has helped us and our local and sector partners to collectively consider what else may be needed to ensure our localist vision for regeneration is translated into reality. This paper sets out the Cross-Government response to the Committee's report.
3. We welcome the Committee's endorsement of the toolkit as a navigational aid to local partners, its enthusiasm for several elements of our approach, including Community Budgets and Tax Increment Finance, and its recognition of the role of Planning and the release of public land. We share the Committee's excitement about the potential of community-led regeneration.

## Localism – A Recurring Theme

4. The Government believes it is for local partners – local councils, communities, civil society organisations and the private sector – to work together to develop local solutions to local challenges. If local regeneration, development and growth are deemed local priorities, then it is for local partners to determine the appropriate plans and strategies to deliver this.
5. In economic issues, partners will want to work across economic areas, for example through their local enterprise partnership. Other regeneration activities may take place more locally, but still may benefit from being connected to wider growth activity.
6. The Government's aim is to promote strong, sustainable and balanced growth in every part of the country, and a year ago it set out its approach as to how it would do so. One year on, the *Supporting Local Growth*<sup>1</sup> report highlights the progress the government has made with the introduction of Local Enterprise Partnerships, Enterprise Zones, a Regional Growth Fund and a Growing Places Fund amongst many new initiatives.
7. Whilst we agree with many of the issues raised in the Committee's report, we consider that several are for local or sector partners to address, rather than central Government.

## Response to Committee Conclusions & Recommendations

8. The Select Committee's conclusions and recommendations are quoted below in boxes, with the Government's response underneath. They are presented in the same order and under the same headings as in the Committee's report.

### The Government's approach: *Regeneration to enable growth* / Targeting those in need

#### **Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 1:**

*We do not consider Regeneration to enable growth to be adequate as a statement of the Government's approach: it lacks strategic coherence and does not seek to define what is meant by the term "regeneration". It is unclear about the nature of the problem it is trying to solve and to what overall outcome the measures set out will contribute. We accept that, as part of a localist approach, there is merit in including a toolkit of options from which local authorities, businesses and community groups can draw. However, within such an approach, central government still has to play its part by setting the national policy direction. Regeneration to enable growth fails to do this and provides no evidence that the Government has a clear strategy for regeneration. (Paragraph 11)*

#### **Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 2:**

*We recommend that the Government develop and publish a strategy that recognises the deep-seated problems faced by the most disadvantaged communities, and sets out measures explicitly focussed upon tackling these issues. (Paragraph 18)*

9. As set out in our written evidence<sup>2</sup> to the Committee, the previous approach to regeneration failed to deliver much improvement – programmes were insufficiently tailored to local circumstances, results were modest, and the needs and aspirations of local people were ignored. Moreover, it was hugely expensive and encouraged a culture of dependency on the public sector.
10. The Government is committed to localism and, in the context of regeneration, this means allowing local partners – local authorities, communities, businesses and civil society organisations – to determine their own priorities and strategies for driving their own area forward.
11. At its core, regeneration is about concerted action to address the challenges and problems faced by the community of a particular place. It's about widening opportunities, growing the local economy, and improving people's lives. But beyond that high-level definition, it is not for Government to define what regeneration is, what it should look like, or

what measures should be used to drive it. That will depend on the place – the local characteristics, challenges and opportunities.

12. The Coalition Government is committed to creating directly elected mayors in the 12 largest English cities subject to confirmatory referendums. And, through the Localism Act, responsibility for strategic regeneration in London is being devolved to the Mayor of London from April 2012, with the regeneration activities of the Homes and Communities Agency and London Development Agency being brought together within the Greater London Authority and the establishment of the Mayoral Development Corporation for the Olympic Park.
13. An example of where community-led regeneration has succeeded where a national top-down approach failed is in Whiteway, Bath. This was the subject of a significant Single Regeneration Budget programme which failed to deliver its aims and was seen as divisive. Social action charity RE:generate subsequently worked with the community to lead a local intervention – engaging local people to design and deliver a range of community projects to address the challenges they faced. This built trust, respect and relationships at grassroots level among local residents, and improved attitudes and behaviours throughout the community. Previous offenders were engaged in many of the projects, giving them a strong sense of purpose and creating a positive peer pressure. Offending reduced, crime fell by more than 80%, and attitudes towards the area improved.
14. The Government is focusing on economic growth and strengthening the health of the national economy as its number one priority. It is only through economic growth that as a country we will have the resources and opportunities to tackle unemployment, poverty, poor health and inequality, and improve standards of living. Regeneration in its broadest sense will only really succeed and be sustainable if the underlying conditions for growth are right, with a healthy private sector economy.
15. As described in *Supporting Local Growth*, the number one priority remains getting the deficit under control. But we also want to promote strong local economies, with thriving businesses and new jobs, in the North and South, village and city. Instead of seeking to engineer growth from Whitehall or through regional agencies, we are now putting power in the hands of local councils and businesses. Instead of seeing public investment as a solution in itself, we have a renewed focus and are using that to stimulate private growth and employment - catalysing investment and encouraging enterprise.
16. Many of the tools we have devised for delivering economic growth will bring regenerative benefits and help to address disadvantage. For example an increase in the number of jobs can bring new skills and employment opportunities for local unemployed people to find employment and move up the career ladder. It can also increase employee spending in the local area. Development can bring improvements in infrastructure,

services and environment that everyone can enjoy. The growth incentives can help people see the benefit of welcoming change in their communities. And investment streams derived from growth, for example the New Homes Bonus, Community Infrastructure Levy, or, in the future, business rates retention, can be reinvested in regeneration if this is what local people want to do. It is up to local partners to ensure these opportunities are harnessed, so that the benefits of growth are helped to spread to nearby disadvantaged communities.

17. Every place has the potential to grow, however we recognise that growth may be harder for some areas to achieve. This is why the Government is providing a wide range of measures that will help struggling and disadvantaged places to address such challenges:
- Through the Cities agenda, we are agreeing bespoke deals with the Core Cities to support them to address specific challenges and barriers to growth and maximise their prosperity.
  - The £2.4bn Regional Growth Fund is targeted particularly at places with a local economy reliant largely on the public sector.
  - The Autumn Statement included provision for 100% capital allowances in the Enterprise Zones in Sheffield, the Black Country, Liverpool, Tees Valley, North Eastern, and the Humber.
  - The most challenged former Housing Market Renewal areas have received transition funding to ensure a structured exit from this flawed programme.
  - The Community First grants are specifically targeted at areas with high levels of deprivation and fast rises in worklessness. Also, all the Community Organisers identified to date are from disadvantaged areas.
  - The Recovery Fund and High Street Support Scheme<sup>3</sup>, and our contribution to the Mayors' London Enterprise Fund, are helping areas which suffered in the August riots.
  - Government is investing £15m in Rural Growth Networks, driven by local enterprise partnerships, to address identified barriers to growth in rural areas.
  - The Government has acted to ensure that preparations for the Olympic legacy are well advanced through its sponsorship and funding of the Olympic Park Legacy Company, including £500m to transform the Olympic Park after the games to create a new community in East London. Contracts for the Aquatics Centre, Multi-Use Arena and Olympics visitor attraction will secure 75% of the 254 jobs for the local people in the Host Boroughs. The Legacy Company is also working to create supply chain opportunities for small and medium sized enterprises in the locality, and to secure the legacy of the Stadium and the International Broadcast and Media Centres before the Olympic Games.
18. Government has no plans to publish a national regeneration strategy. A national regeneration strategy – prescribing outcomes, targets and measures, methods or roles – would be inconsistent with our localist approach to regeneration. Instead, we are providing the tools, flexibilities,

options and powers that will allow local partners to develop their own regeneration strategy to address their own priorities. In this way, there will be different strategies in different places to address different problems.

## Funding and private investment

### **Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 3:**

*Unless alternative ways of funding regeneration can be found, there is a risk of momentum and investment being lost and problems being stored up for the future. (Paragraph 33)*

### **Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 4:**

*We recommend that the Government develop and publish a clear and coherent strategy for how private sector investment can be attracted into areas of market failure. This strategy should, amongst other things, identify potential sources of gap funding that can be used to stimulate private investment. It should also explore how public funding flows can be aligned to ensure they lever in the maximum amount of private capital. (Paragraph 37)*

19. The reality of the fiscal deficit and the global economic crisis means that the Government has had to take tough decisions, and focus our limited resources on deficit reduction and growing the economy.

20. Our written evidence<sup>2</sup> to the Select Committee set out a range of measures to lever in private sector investment, such as Tax Increment Finance and Enterprise Zones. Since the Committee's inquiry, the Government has announced a number of additional measures, including:

- The Autumn Statement included up to £21bn of credit easing to strengthen the flow of credit to smaller businesses; £6.3bn additional spending on infrastructure, including an increase to the Regional Growth Fund; proposals to allow borrowing against the Community Infrastructure Levy; and capital allowances in some of the Enterprise Zones.
- The Housing Strategy included the Getting Britain Building investment fund and Build Now Pay Later model.
- Extra measures to tackle empty homes, including £100m to bring empty homes back into use as affordable housing, and changes to council tax to help tackle empty homes and bring them back into productive use. In addition, £50m to tackle concentrations of poor quality homes in areas of low demand - match funding from local partners will bring this to £100m.
- The £500m Growing Places Fund to unlock key infrastructure to support economic and housing growth.
- The Localism Act, which:
  - simplifies the process for claiming small business rate relief;

- waives £175m of backdated business rates demands levied on businesses, including some in ports;
  - gives local authorities wide-ranging, discretionary powers to grant business rates discounts; and
  - ensures that all future Business Rates Supplements projects, both where they fund more or less than a third of the overall project, will have to be put to the ballot so that liable businesses can decide whether to impose the Business Rate Supplement upon themselves.
- A package of business growth initiatives, helping small businesses grow and create jobs, export to new markets, secure finance and cut red tape, including the expansion of UK Trade and Investment services to support 50,000 businesses a year; and the Red Tape Challenge.

21. We are pleased to see the private sector stepping in - there are already examples of the private sector investing, individually or collectively, in funds and schemes that support regeneration. Examples include:

- UK Regeneration's "20000 homes by 2020" programme, backed by Barclays Capital, which offers finance together with the support of an expert panel to shape and unlock the regeneration of key sites to deliver new private rented homes within mixed use developments.
- The Wellcome Trust's High Street Fund, offering further assistance to firms facing financial difficulties in the wake of the August riots.
- Several Regional Growth Fund projects include private investment in activity to address local deprivation – examples include the “Creating Private Sector Jobs and Businesses with Disadvantaged Groups in the North East of England” project, and the Keepmoat Homes project which will revitalise the local housing market and deliver major environmental improvement in an area of blight.

22. We recognise the reduced availability of funding poses a considerable challenge for some places and projects, and some high-spend programmes are not viable in the current climate and would have relied too much on the public purse well into the future. The reduced availability of funding means local partners may want to think afresh not only about the overall shape of their programmes, but also about the sequencing of delivery. But the funding climate is not all that has changed - roles, expectations and powers have changed too.

23. Local partners need to take a more creative approach, focusing on opportunities, and taking a more cohesive approach to align strands of activity and investment for maximum effect. There are several examples of this already, for example:

- New Deal for Communities partnership Bradford Trident, following the end of the New Deal for Communities programme, now continues to operate as a social enterprise, earning their income through rental income from its property portfolio and from other funds obtained through grants and commissions. They have recently been selected as a Community Budget pilot.

- Following the end of direct regeneration funding to develop the Cranbrook New Community in Exeter, local partners have maintained momentum and private sector confidence by creating a new innovative revolving fund, using clawback of value from completed phases of development, the New Homes Bonus, and any Community Infrastructure Levy income. This will enable future phases of the project to be delivered and much of the original ambition to be realised.
- To counteract reductions in Government funding, Kent local authorities are considering creating their own Infrastructure Fund for regeneration and infrastructure schemes. Local authorities would commit cash and/or land assets into a joint fund which would be managed externally to attract private sector investment.
- When the £252m Private Finance Initiative application for Collyhurst Estate was unsuccessful, Manchester City Council, with support from the Homes and Communities Agency, commissioned a Development Framework and Phasing Plan for the area which, through a private sector partner, aims to build on the continuing £27m Decent Homes investment and deliver the aspirations of the Private Finance Initiative bid over an extended timeframe.

24. Government has put in place a number of transition funds to give local partners breathing space to move either to a managed close or to a self-sustaining model. These include:

- The £5m transition fund for Growth and Housing Market Renewal areas.
- A further £35.5m Housing Market Renewal transition fund, which will be match-funded by local authorities, giving overall funding of £71m.
- The £107m Transition Fund for the Voluntary & Community Sector.
- The £2.4bn Regional Growth Fund, helping areas reliant on public sector employment to make the transition to a stronger private sector-led economy.

25. There are still significant Government funds available for growth and regeneration. In this spending period, these include the £500m Growing Places Fund, Coastal Communities Fund (worth £18m in England), European Regional Development Fund (£1.4bn), £5.5bn of Homes and Communities Agency programmes, £100m for problematic empty homes and £50m to tackle concentrations of poor quality homes in areas of low demand, £165m to help rural communities realise full economic potential, the New Homes Bonus (worth £431m in 2012-13), and local retention of council housing rental income. The Local Government Resource Review has set out proposals to allow authorities to benefit from growth in their business rates revenues. We are also giving significant flexibility in funding, so that local partners can target, align and pool budgets to address their priorities.

26. The Government is serious about innovating and adapting to a tighter spending environment by moving from grant-making to recycling models of

finance, to help enable growth, ensure value for money, and conserve scarce resources. An example of this is the Growing Places Fund, which should help the creation of revolving infrastructure funds - as projects unlock development, the developers would repay the public sector outlay through, for example, the uplift in land value or financial receipts.

27. The potential of social finance and philanthropy should not be forgotten. Earlier this year, the Government published its social investment strategy. It sets out a framework of actions, ranging from enabling measures (such as opening up public services and promoting the use of innovative techniques such as Social Impact Bonds) to direct interventions (such as creating Big Society Capital) to stimulate the market. And the Giving White Paper set out proposals for encouraging and supporting charitable donations and social action.

## Planning

### **Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 5:**

*The Government may have good reasons for its proposed reforms to the planning system, but it is not clear that they will have a significant bearing upon regeneration. We question their inclusion within Regeneration to enable growth and the emphasis placed upon them by the Minister. Planning has in fact brought significant benefits to regeneration, in terms of co-ordination, community involvement and town centre preservation. (Paragraph 42)*

28. The Government agrees that an effective planning system plays a significant role in supporting regeneration, and is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth.
29. Our planning reforms are strengthening the role of Local Plans, bringing in provision for Neighbourhood Plans, and simplifying and streamlining existing complex and unwieldy national planning policy through a consolidated and clearer National Planning Policy Framework. We are now considering the responses to the consultation on the draft Framework.
30. The draft Framework says that local planning authorities should ensure that Local Plans identify priority areas for economic regeneration, infrastructure provision and environmental enhancement. The proposed new presumption in favour of sustainable development says that local plans should set out what is needed in each area, that development in line with those plans should be approved without a delay, and that in the absence of an up-to-date plan, the policies in the draft Framework should guide decisions – including its requirement for development to be sustainable. The draft Framework also highlights the importance of creating sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities, including through the regeneration and renewal of areas of poor housing.

31. The Government agrees with the Select Committee that the “town centres first” policy plays a role in promoting regeneration. The draft Framework proposes to retain “town centres first” and in particular the sequential test, primarily in relation to retail and leisure development (rather than offices), and that sites of the lowest environmental value, including so-called brownfield land, should be used as a priority.
32. The National Land Use Database on Previously Developed Land showed there were an estimated 5,350 hectares of brownfield or previously-used land owned by English local authorities in 2009, and the Homes and Communities Agency expects to publish the 2010 figures later this Spring. We expect that local authorities will want a very significant proportion of development to still take place on previously developed land. In December, HM Treasury announced that Land Remediation Relief will be retained following a consultation on a range of tax relief mechanisms. This relief is often a critical element for developers when considering the financial viability of brownfield site remediation and redevelopment to support the housing and construction sectors and the release of large areas of publicly owned land for development. The Homes and Communities Agency is continuing to help release the potential of some of the country’s most challenging brownfield sites by leveraging in private investment and supporting local authorities to develop sites in a sustainable way, helping to create employment opportunities, homes, and public space across England.
33. Through the Localism Act’s provisions on neighbourhood planning, we are putting communities in the driving seat of planning at the neighbourhood level and creating a neighbourhood planning system which is community-led. The 125 neighbourhood planning front-runner projects are demonstrating how neighbourhood planning can be relative simple, and tailored to local opportunities and challenges.
34. We note the Committee’s concerns about the time it takes to get a planning decision. We have announced our intention to introduce a ‘planning guarantee’ – that it should take no longer than 12 months to get a final decision on a planning application. We intend to consult shortly on detailed proposals for how this guarantee would work in practice.

## Evaluation

### **Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 6:**

*The fact that Regeneration to enable growth represents a new and to some extent untested approach makes evaluation particularly important; without it, there is a risk that investment could be wasted. The Minister’s assertion that individual programmes such as the New Homes Bonus will be monitored misses the point: it is their combined impact on regeneration—tackling market failure in deprived communities—that has to be considered. We recommend that the Government identify a set of clear objectives to enable the success of*

*its approach to be assessed at both local and national level. These should form the basis of an ongoing evaluation that looks at both quantitative and qualitative information; this should include consideration of the extent to which communities have become more self-sustaining and less reliant on public sector support. (Paragraph 46)*

35. The previous approach of top-down, one-size-fits-all targets didn't work. Regeneration will translate into different priorities in different places, according to local circumstances. In some places it may have more of a physical focus, in others more social. It can encompass many different areas of public life, from housing, transport and physical environment, to skills, employment, business and health, to crime and social integration, to culture, attitudes and aspirations. To be meaningful and have any chance of success, regeneration objectives have to be set locally.
36. In addition, different places will utilise a different mix of tools and approaches for their own purpose. As such, a national evaluation is simply not feasible. As we set out in our written evidence<sup>2</sup> to the Committee in March, each individual policy or investment within the toolkit is subject to its own evaluation arrangements, and it will be up to local partners to determine the success or otherwise of their plans.
37. More broadly, and in line with evaluating individual policies as part of the regeneration toolkit, Government will note the progress of each local partnership in improving outcomes for local people through Local Enterprise Partnerships, Enterprise Zones and Rural Growth Networks. We will consider each partnership's progress against their own objectives.

### **Stalled schemes**

**Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 7:**

*We recommend that the Government make and publish an assessment of how many regeneration schemes are currently underway and how many are stalled, compared to previous years. It should also identify what it considers to be the main obstacles to physical regeneration at the present time. (Paragraph 49)*

38. It is for local authorities and local enterprise partnerships in the first instance to identify stalled schemes in their area, and consider what action is required to address this.
39. The sector-led Regeneration Commission (see paragraph 47 below) is capturing common reasons why regeneration projects are currently stalled, and will be working with a selection of these as exemplars to show how a creative approach can unlock many of these barriers, including making progress through smaller scale interventions. We are supporting this work by providing information about stalled developments.

40. The Government has put in place a number of measures to help local partners address the issue of stalled schemes. These include:
- The £500m Growing Places Fund, which will deliver key infrastructure to support economic and housing growth.
  - The £400m Get Britain Building investment fund, which will support building firms in need of development finance, including small and medium-sized builders, to get going on stalled sites.
  - Consulting on a proposal to reconsider those planning obligations agreed prior to April 2010 where development is stalled.
  - Releasing public land under a Build Now, Pay Later model - where there is market demand and where this is affordable and represents value for money - to support builders who are struggling to get finance upfront.
  - The recently announced mortgage indemnity scheme, which will help creditworthy buyers of new homes access mortgages up to 95% loan to transfer value. This will help stimulate housing supply, enabling housebuilders to bring forward some sites and units which have stalled, as a result of poor mortgage availability.

## Housing Market Renewal

### **Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 8:**

*We recommend that the Government set out a plan for a “managed wind-down” of the Housing Market Renewal programme in all pathfinder areas. In doing so, it should ensure that sufficient funds are available to eradicate the blight that has been left in many neighbourhoods. (Paragraph 58)*

41. The former Government’s Housing Market Renewal programme created large scale targets for demolition clearance and new build, with imposed schemes which were often resented by local communities and created as many problems as they solved. Under this controversial scheme, local communities in some of the most deprived areas of the country were told they would see a transformation of their areas. In reality, this amounted to bulldozing buildings and knocking down neighbourhoods, pitting neighbour against neighbour, demolishing our Victorian heritage and leaving families trapped in abandoned streets.
42. Whilst the Housing Market Renewal programme has ended, the Government has already put in place a “managed wind-down” plan for the programme. On 31 January 2011, Government announced a £5m Growth and Housing Market Renewal transition revenue fund to help safeguard and develop expertise and capacity in key growth and former Housing Market Renewal locations.
43. In many former Housing Market Renewal areas, the programme is largely complete and real progress has been made in terms of meeting original objectives and moving the lowest quartile house prices much closer to the

regional average. However, we recognise that in the five most challenged former Housing Market Renewal areas (Merseyside, East Lancashire, North Staffordshire, Hull and Teeside), some schemes have stalled often leaving only a few homes occupied in a derelict street. Government announced a transition fund totalling £35.5m to address this problem, and local authority match funding brings the total pot available to £71m. This will ensure that all families in streets or blocks that are more than fifty percent vacant will now be helped. Government has recently announced allocations for the £35.5m fund.

44. As a part of the bidding process to receive this funding, authorities were required to set out clear exit strategies detailing how any remaining Housing Market Renewal commitments would be dealt with.
45. It is important that we continue to support housing and regeneration in places which have previously experienced severe housing market challenges. DCLG and the Homes and Community Agency will continue to work closely with all former Housing Market Renewal areas, whether or not eligible to bid for the transition fund. In many places there has been much real progress but we recognise there remain concerns about maintaining momentum in carrying forward renewal in the future. An ambitious and creative approach to the new funding sources, such as the New Homes Bonus, will be needed at local level to move forward in this respect and to support locally driven growth. For example, Wakefield council is using some of its New Homes Bonus to work with homeowners of empty properties to help and support them bring forward their properties for occupation. The council is looking to continue this work to increase the supply of homes in their area to benefit the people in Wakefield.

## Knowledge and skills

### **Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 9:**

*We recommend that the Government review how regeneration knowledge and skills can be preserved and bolstered. It should consider options for sharing good practice and ensuring that there are mechanisms in place to pass on the knowledge of experienced practitioners. Actions from the review must then be implemented at the earliest opportunity. (Paragraph 61)*

46. Government agrees that the retention and sharing of knowledge, skills and good practice is important for this sector. However, it is for the sector to lead on this rather than Government.
47. We have been pleased to see recognition within the sector that the changed policy and fiscal environment brings both new responsibilities and new opportunities. In particular, the Regeneration Commission - formed as part of the *Building a Better Britain* campaign initiated by UK Regeneration and the Estates Gazette - consists of developers, investors, advisors and local authorities, who are working together to address the

issue of local skills and knowledge for regeneration, and other challenges facing the sector.

48. Other more specific activities on this front include:

- UK Regeneration holds regular events and produces an online blog. In collaboration with the Homes and Communities Agency, Local Government Association and other partners they are also developing a Knowledge website that brings together information and evaluation of past and present regeneration initiatives and helps to guide people through the various elements of the regeneration toolkit.
- The Local Government Association is running growth debates for local authorities as part of a campaign to raise local ambition. These include discussion on spreading the benefits of growth to address disadvantage. They are also developing new web resources enabling sharing of growth and regeneration practice.
- The Local Government Association's Planning Advisory Service is supporting councils to understand and implement the changes brought about by the Localism Act.
- The Homes and Communities Agency provide technical and specialist advice, including on legal agreements, complex planning applications, investment models and deal brokering, and spatial and market intelligence.
- The housing sector has recently produced a guide highlighting all the initiatives and ideas created by Localism and the Government's Plan for Growth as well as other related policy reforms.
- Groundwork is working with local organisations in some of the poorest places, offering advice and support to help them build their capacity to drive forward local environmental projects, secure funding and engage the wider community.

49. Central Government is playing a facilitative and supportive role in much of this work, and for example with local enterprise partnerships (e.g. through the Enterprise Zone forum), in our work with the core cities, and through our Barrier Busting Portal. We are supporting neighbourhood planning, through the publication of a guide and funding for the provision of help and assistance to community groups and parish councils undertaking neighbourhood planning. The Community Organisers programme is supporting local communities to take action on the things that matter most to them, to exploit the assets and opportunities that they have, and to become more self reliant.

50. We will continue to work with the sector and localities to support such knowledge and skills building work.

### **Learning the lessons**

**Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 10:**

*While views about the effectiveness of the competitive element varied, our*

*evidence and what we learned on the visit suggested that City Challenge brought a number of benefits. Such benefits included:*

- *the requirement for private sector leverage;*
- *a five year programme subject to satisfactory review;*
- *the mixture of revenue and capital projects;*
- *dedicated resources committed to delivery;*
- *the commitment from the private sector, public sector and community involvement;*
- *the high level of expertise built up;*
- *very strong community involvement; and*
- *the commitment to complete regeneration, including housing, education, job creation and all quality of life improvements.*

*In looking to future regeneration schemes, the Government should have regard to these elements. (Paragraph 78)*

**Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 11:**

*We recommend that the Government carry out an urgent review of the various regeneration programmes that have taken place over the past and utilise the lessons learned for future programmes. In particular, we note that there is widespread support that City Challenge was a successful programme in concentrating resources on specific areas to promote wholesale regeneration. We further recommend that the Government invite local authorities and their partners to put forward innovative ideas for tackling regeneration in their areas. The most robust of these should then be designated as ‘pathfinders’ and taken forward with government support. Their success should be evaluated to determine the potential for wider implementation. (Paragraph 81)*

51. The Government’s written evidence<sup>2</sup> sets out how our approach builds on lessons learned from previous regeneration programmes. These are drawn from a large bank of analysis and evaluations, including the Single Regeneration Budget, the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, and the New Deal for Communities. The evaluations and analysis shows some serious limitations of past approaches to regeneration, including:

- Modest results despite favourable economic conditions and high levels of investment
- Failure to tailor to local circumstances and priorities
- Failure to involve local people
- High levels of bureaucracy
- Creation of a dependency culture
- Discouragement of private sector investors

52. One of the key lessons from the evaluation of previous regeneration programmes is the importance of a flexible, responsive approach that meets local needs. This goes to the heart of our localism and decentralisation agendas. Our approach seeks to address each of these, and to allow local partners to build on what works locally. In light of the

evidence, we consider that nationally prescribed objectives or interventions would be unhelpful.

53. Evaluations of all significant Government policies and investments are publicly available. However it is for local partners to draw their own conclusions, apply the relevant lessons to their particular circumstances, and to define the nature of future regeneration schemes locally.
54. We are keen to encourage innovation and creative thinking in regeneration, and have been pleased to see the way many areas are adapting to the changes and responding positively to the new opportunities. For example, the Vale of White Horse (Oxfordshire) is using its New Homes Bonus income to provide free car parking in three market towns to boost town centre vitality.
55. We are particularly pleased to see the creation of a sector-led Regeneration Commission (see paragraph 47 above) with the purpose of working creatively through some of the perceived challenges, and inspiring and promoting positive and creative approaches at a local level.

## **Tax Increment Financing**

### **Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 12:**

*It is important not to consider Tax Increment Financing as the answer to all regeneration problems. It relies on an increase in business rates revenue and accordingly may not be successful in some of the most deprived areas. Nevertheless, it offers the potential to raise finance for regeneration in certain circumstances, and should be available to local partners alongside other tools. We agree that the best time to implement TIF would be as the economy emerges from recession. We look forward to its introduction at the earliest opportunity and to seeing how the Government's proposals work out in practice. (Paragraph 88)*

56. Tax Increment Financing powers will enable councils to borrow against future increases in business rates to fund the provision of infrastructure, and to unlock additional economic growth.
57. We agree with the Committee that Tax Increment Finance isn't an answer to all regeneration projects. Nonetheless it is a tool that can be used to unlock development. Whether it is the appropriate tool will reflect the local circumstances and will depend on the infrastructure required, the end development that is unlocked and the extent to which the additional business rate uplift is sufficient to repay the borrowing required.
58. Considerable steps have already been taken to deliver Tax Increment Finance. For example, the Enterprise Zone policy guarantees that the rate uplift from within the 24 Zones can be kept by the local enterprise

partnership, allowing local enterprise partnerships to undertake Tax Increment Finance style borrowing.

59. The Government also announced<sup>4</sup> on 19 December its proposals for the local retention of rates and how we will implement Tax Increment Finance.
60. The necessary legislation is being taken through Parliament in the Local Government Finance Bill.

## Enterprise Zones

### **Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 13:**

*We recommend that the Government work with local partners establishing Enterprise Zones to ensure that each zone has a strategy for bringing benefits to disadvantaged communities across surrounding areas. These strategies should be informed by lessons from the earlier experience of Enterprise Zones. (Paragraph 93)*

61. We are pleased that the Committee supports the Government's creation of Enterprise Zones, and are working closely with local enterprise partnerships and local authorities to support their development.
62. We are keen to ensure that the benefits of Enterprise Zones are felt across a wider economic area, and the retention of all business rate growth within the Zone for a period of at least 25 years will be used to support the delivery of economic priorities for the local enterprise partnership area as a whole.
63. We want Enterprise Zones to promote additionality – new jobs and businesses – and not merely move activity from one area within a local enterprise partnership to another. We have taken on board the lessons of the 1980's Enterprise Zones which pitted local authority against local authority, allowing some businesses to jump from one to another. This time we have focused on much larger areas – local enterprise partnerships. These partnerships are actively developing and implementing strategies to ensure additionality.
64. We have already asked local enterprise partnerships to consider what other wider economic and social benefits their Enterprise Zone will bring to the local enterprise partnership areas, and how the new employment opportunities created can benefit local people.
65. A number of partnerships are considering measures to try and maximise the benefits of the Zones to the local areas. For example, Leicester and Leicestershire local enterprise partnership are already in discussion with Universities and Colleges, the National Apprenticeship Service, Job Centre Plus and Work programme contractors to align resources to deliver

a co-ordinated support programme to assist local residents access the employment opportunities created by the Zone.

66. We will continue to encourage partnerships to investigate similar approaches to spread the benefit of the opportunities created to nearby areas of need.

## Public land

### **Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 14:**

*We recommend that DCLG issue guidance to local and national public bodies on how public land can best be used for regeneration. This guidance should include provision for an independent expert assessment of whether a particular site is viable and its potential for delivering regeneration. It should also encourage public sector organisations to be prepared to take greater risks with their land. In particular, the Government should instruct the Homes and Communities Agency to transfer land to local partners at no cost where benefits in terms of regeneration can be identified. (Paragraph 104)*

### **Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 15:**

*It is also important to maximise the contribution that asset backed vehicles could make to regeneration. We recommend that the Government's guidance make clear that borrowing by asset backed vehicles will be considered outside of local government prudential borrowing limits. (Paragraph 105)*

67. We agree with the Committee that assets, particularly land, have an important role to play in stimulating and enabling regeneration, and that asset-backed vehicles can make an important contribution.
68. Government has already published guidance<sup>5</sup> on joint ventures. Subsequently, Local Partnerships have produced further guidance<sup>6</sup> on joint ventures and capital investment-led regeneration, to assist local authorities and local public bodies navigate their way through the range of options available for funding and collaborating on the development, management and use of assets, including land. It includes issues such as considering the appropriate finance solution, the use of land and asset sales, prudential borrowing, resourcing joint ventures, finance options and sources of finance, and risk.
69. There are several financing options for asset-backed vehicles. The applicability of these will depend upon the particular nature and detail of the individual vehicle. Viability assessment tools are also already commercially available for local authorities and practitioners. In addition, more specific advice on how to prepare viability assessments to inform the preparation of local planning policies will soon be published by a developer

and local authority-led stakeholder group. We do not agree that further guidance on land and assets is required.

70. In addition to commercial undertakings, there are also many examples of successful community development and regeneration organisations built on a portfolio of assets – for example Bradford Trident, the Witton Lodge Community Association in Birmingham, and the Coin Street Community Builders in London.
71. The Asset Transfer Unit and the Communitybuilders programme provide expert advice, guidance and support to help communities to acquire and transform land and buildings into sustainable community assets. The Community Right to Bid in the Localism Act will provide community groups with the time to put together a bid to buy an asset that is important to them.
72. The Government is also taking decisive action to free up public sector land with the capacity for up to 100,000 new homes through our accelerated surplus public sector land disposal programme, with much of this being brownfield or previously used land. Four major landholding Government Departments and the Homes and Communities Agency have each published strategies to release to the market thousands of acres of surplus formerly used public land for development. We will work with these departments to keep their strategies under review, looking for opportunities to go even further. In the next phase of the programme, we will consider those Departments and Agencies with smaller landholdings.
73. The Government has committed to maximise the use of Build Now, Pay Later models on surplus public land, where there is market demand, it represents value for money and is affordable. This will enable developers to start work on public land sites, without having to bear the upfront cost of paying for the land. We will also be looking in detail at how we can unlock the release of and maximise development opportunities on key surplus public sector sites. To help us with this work we will bring together a small advisory group of experts in early 2012.
74. Through the new Community Right to Reclaim Land<sup>7</sup>, we are enabling communities to challenge public sector landowners to sell unused or underused land. Further details on all this work are set out in our Housing Strategy<sup>8</sup>. Through the Free Schools programme, we want to make it easier for groups seeking to open Free Schools to find existing buildings in their area that can be easily adapted for school use. A wide range of government and public buildings could provide suitable accommodation for a Free School and we are looking at ways of enabling more Free Schools to open in public buildings.
75. Due to the pressing need to reduce the deficit and maximise value for the taxpayer, Government is seeking to dispose of such assets at market value. However, we also have an eye to the way such assets can support local plans and ambitions, in particular in terms of economic, housing and

community activities. In disposing of its land, Government is therefore guided by affordability, the fit with Government's strategic priorities, and best value for money overall. DCLG has already provided the Homes and Communities Agency with a general consent to dispose of land at less than best consideration in certain defined circumstances. Receipts from Homes and Communities Agency land sales are reinvested by DCLG in line with Ministers' priorities including housing and regeneration.

76. The Department has worked closely with 11 pathfinder areas to better use the land and buildings that the public sector own in areas, improving services and generating savings. Areas demonstrated a possible reduction in floorspace of between 10 and 29 per cent, improve services and have wider benefits such as regeneration and growth.
77. The Local Government Association has now taken over the leadership of asset management support and created a second wave of the Pathfinders. We also believe that there is a public interest in knowing what public land and buildings are held, enabling citizens to question decisions taken by public sector agencies for delivering services to local communities and leading regeneration. The Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency recommends that local authorities publish the location of public land and building assets and key attribute information that is normally recorded on asset registers. We are currently considering the best way to make this more transparent, building on the demonstrator map of public sector assets published in August which locates over 180,000 assets owned by almost 600 public sector bodies, including Central Government and 87 councils.

## European Funding

### **Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 16:**

*We recommend that the Government set out proposals for working with local partners to identify sources of match funding, with a view to ensuring that all remaining European Regional Development Fund money is spent. (Paragraph 111)*

78. The European Regional Development Fund programme has met all its spend targets for this year in all regions (subject to one final confirmation for Yorkshire and Humber). The current programme is two thirds of the way through, and we have invested some two-thirds of the money, and money can continue to be paid out until the end of 2015. Recent calls for projects have if anything been over-subscribed. We are therefore confident that we will be able to access all available funds from the European Regional Development Fund.
79. Recent activities to bring through further match funding include the following:

- We have carried out a joint exercise with BIS to identify potential sources of funding in central government, and written to Local Management Committees to bring this to their attention. Initial responses are encouraging.
- We are now getting ready for a third round of Regional Growth Fund bids.
- We have announced further funding through the Growing Places Fund.
- We said in the Growth Review that we were looking for greater flexibility in matching European Regional Development Fund to broadband spend. We are about to issue revised guidance giving such flexibility.
- We are looking at setting up new venture capital loan funds to give local areas more flexibility to put spend where it is needed.

80. Public sector funding is not the only potential match for European funding, and the potential of using private funds should not be underestimated. This is particularly the case with some Financial Engineering Instruments, which can provide European Regional Development Fund support for Small and Medium Enterprises and urban development projects in the form of loans, guarantees or equity investments. Match funding for such investments can come from private sector investors such as banks (including the European Investment Bank), limited companies, social enterprises, cooperatives and individual investors.

81. This Government has transformed the management of European Regional Development Fund programmes in England. We have reduced the liabilities we inherited on the 2000-06 programme by £130m. We have also overhauled the 2007-13 programmes by pulling eight separate management processes under one centrally coordinated system. As a result of these measures, the European Commission lifted a payment interruption it had imposed on the programmes. This means more money going to meet local needs rather than being paid back to the European Commission.

**Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 17:**

*We recommend that the Government disseminate to relevant bodies guidance setting out the possibilities for the use of JESSICA in regeneration. This guidance should include examples of schemes in which JESSICA is already being successfully employed. (Paragraph 112)*

82. European Regional Development Fund supported Urban Development Fund and Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas (JESSICA) initiatives can be deployed effectively to support the urban agenda of local partners. Three JESSICA projects are in operation in England. All three are at an early stage, however as we continue to learn lessons these will continue to be shared across programmes and with partners. The Government is also working very closely in particular with

the Sheffield City Region local enterprise partnership and is at an advanced stage of development of a JESSICA fund for South Yorkshire.

83. Local partners in each European Regional Development Fund programme area are already well versed in the possibilities of using JESSICA initiatives to support urban regeneration, and we do not agree that further guidance is required. Each European Programme Delivery Team has a Financial Engineering Instruments lead who feeds into a national network that regularly shares expertise and experiences of all types of Financial Engineering Instrument projects – including JESSICA funds.

### **Community-led regeneration**

#### **Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 18:**

*We recommend that the Government work with representatives of the voluntary and community sector to develop more detailed proposals for promoting the active involvement of communities and community groups in regeneration. We invite the Government to provide us, in its response to our Report, with a number of examples of "practical mechanisms" for implementing community-led regeneration, both those which are already in use and those which the Government intends to develop. These examples should address the particular concerns community groups have expressed to us about their capacity to play a greater role in regeneration, and set out how they will give such groups confidence about their future and a degree of certainty about funding. (Paragraph 118)*

84. We are pleased that the Committee shares our view that regeneration has to be driven at the local level to be successful, which is of course the foundation of our whole approach.
85. The National Compact, renewed in December 2010, is the agreement between Government and the voluntary and community sector on how to work better together. All Government dealings with the voluntary and community sector should be Compact compliant. All councils in England also have a Local Compact which improves their relationship with the sector and other local public bodies.
86. In addition, in September 2011, the Government issued new Best Value guidance: a 'fair deal' which cuts back unnecessary red tape on local authorities, while introducing new requirements for councils to consult with local voluntary organisations on changes to funding and service. It will also give the voluntary sector the opportunity to offer options for reshaping and improving local authority services.
87. We have put in place a range of measures to strengthen and support the voluntary and community sector, including:
- £107m Transition Fund to support those charities, voluntary groups and social enterprises delivering front-line services who were most

affected by public funding reductions. The fund aims to enable these organisations to manage the transition to a tighter funding environment and to take advantage of future opportunities presented by the Big Society. All the available funding has now been awarded, with over 1,000 organisations receiving grants.

- £30m Transforming Local Infrastructure fund to help modernise organisations that supply critical support to frontline charities, voluntary groups and social enterprises.
- £10m Investment and Contract Readiness Fund being made available to charities and social enterprises to help them develop the skills and infrastructure to win more capital investment and public service.
- Simplifying Gift Aid, and encouraging legacy-giving by reducing the rate of inheritance tax for those estates leaving 10% or more to charity.

88. The Government has put in place several other measures to promote, support and facilitate the active involvement of communities and community groups in regeneration. These include:

- Community Organisers – Up to 5,000 Community Organisers will work closely with communities to identify local leaders, projects and opportunities, and encourage the local community to work together to improve their local area.
- Big Society Capital – Big Society Capital will be capitalised with up to around £400m released over time from dormant bank accounts scheme, and an additional £200m will be provided by the four largest UK high street banks. Big Society Capital will invest in financial intermediaries in the social investment market, who in turn will increase access to finance for frontline, social organisations.
- Community First – The Community First programme will help communities come together through new and existing community groups, to identify local priorities, plan for their future and become more resilient. Community First includes a £30m small grant programme for some of the most deprived areas in the country.
- Community Rights – The new community rights contained in the Localism Act will give communities the opportunities to bid to buy local assets that are important to them and bid to run local services differently and better. The Community Right to Build will give communities the right to build the homes, shops, businesses and facilities that they want to see in their area. All these rights will be able to contribute to regeneration. We have asked groups what support they would need to be able to take advantage of these new rights and are currently developing proposals.
- Neighbourhood Planning – Neighbourhood Planning will give communities a direct say over the future development and planning of their areas. The Government is providing £50m to support local councils in making neighbourhood planning a success. We are also supporting 126 neighbourhood planning front-runners. We have also provided over £3m to four support organisations to directly

support community groups in taking advantage of the opportunities of planning at a neighbourhood level.

- Neighbourhood Level Community Budgets - Community Budgets enable local public service providers and communities to agree how services can be better delivered, targeting resources to address local priorities.

89. As stated in our written evidence<sup>2</sup> to the Committee earlier this year, “we should not be fooled into thinking we are starting from scratch here – local partners have not waited for Government to give them permission to take ownership of their local area.” Many community and voluntary groups, social enterprises and partnerships are already active across the country, leading and supporting regeneration to their neighbourhood.

90. Many of these community groups face or have faced the pressure of reduced Government investment, but have evolved to become self-sustaining organisations. St Peters Partnerships in Oldham, Manchester, for example established a *trading* arm which runs several local authority services at competitive prices for the local authority, whilst also providing great career opportunities for local disadvantaged people. A different approach was taken by Coin Street Community Builders, who acquired derelict land and formed a co-operative to build commercial property and sporting venues, which now generate significant income from commercial rent, whilst also housing services and facilities to meet the needs of the local community. As outlined above, the Government is already taking considerable steps to facilitate community and local ownership of assets.

91. The Government will continue to listen and to work with the regeneration and community sectors to understand how community-led regeneration can be facilitated further.

## Community Budgets

### **Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 19:**

*We recommend that the second phase of the Local Government Resource Review consider how Community Budgets can be used to support regeneration. The Government should ensure that areas with a clear regeneration need are included amongst those chosen to pilot the new neighbourhood level and whole area Community Budgets. These pilots should look in part at how Community Budgets can best be used to tackle issues of deprivation and disadvantage. (Paragraph 129)*

### **Select Committee Conclusion / Recommendation 20:**

*We recommend that the Government allow Greater Manchester to take forward its proposal for a single budget at the earliest opportunity, as one of a series of pilots exploring the pooling of capital budgets in areas such as housing, economic development and transport. These pilots should consider*

*the potential of this pooling approach to lever in greater private sector investment. There is an onus upon local authorities as well as central government to make Community Budgets work. We therefore urge other councils and partnerships to come forward with innovative proposals which build on the Community Budgets model. The Government should ensure such proposals are given the necessary support. (Paragraph 130)*

92. We welcome the Committee's recognition of the power of Community Budgets and the difference that they can make. A Community Budget:
- Enables local public service providers to come together and agree how services can be better delivered, how the money to fund them should be managed and how they will organise themselves;
  - Allows local councils, communities and individuals to rise to the challenge of tackling previously intractable, complex and interconnected problems requiring multi-agency solutions; and,
  - Is, therefore, designed locally and not by Whitehall, although it needs Whitehall to work differently.

In this way, Community Budgets are pioneering local solutions to local problems and more integrated approaches to the provision of public services to address local priorities.

93. Sixteen areas have pioneered the use of the Community Budget approach to improve the delivery of services for troubled families and in doing so have found ways of removing barriers to cross-organisational working, such as the sharing of information and the analysis of costs and benefits that might accrue in different ways to different local bodies. This work is now available to all areas.

94. On 22 December we announced<sup>9</sup> that:

- Four areas (Cheshire West and Chester, Essex, Greater Manchester and West London Tri-Boroughs) will pilot Whole-Place Community Budgets to test how bringing all funding on local public services into one place can support the radical redesign and improvement of local public services;
- Fourteen areas will be part of a Challenge and Learning Network to help drive the Whole-Place agenda forward, helping to ensure that the pilots are ambitious, sustainable and capable of being replicated;
- Ten areas will pilot neighbourhood-level Community Budgets to test how communities and local people can have greater control and influence over the services delivered in their neighbourhood and the budgets that fund them.

95. The pilot areas were selected against the clear criteria and process set out in the Community Budget Prospectus<sup>10</sup> published on 17<sup>th</sup> October.

96. These pilots, at the heart of the second phase of the Local Government Resource Review, will look at how we might extend financial autonomy to local bodies, communities and local people through Community Budgets. But, Community Budgets are developed bottom up and not driven by Whitehall – it will be for the pilot areas to decide what their priorities should be, and whether or not this includes any form of regeneration. Early signs are that the Whole-Place pilots will have a strong emphasis on securing economic growth and reducing individuals' dependency on the state. The Government wants and expects ambitious and challenging proposals from the pilot areas. Whatever their priorities, we will work closely with the pilot areas to work-up ambitious proposals that can transform the areas, delivering substantially better outcomes for local people, reductions in waste and duplication and thus securing significant financial savings.
97. Community Budgets can be used to tackle many different complex and multi-agency problems. We would extend the Committee's encouragement to all local partners, not just councils and partnerships, to come forward with innovative ideas that Government could pursue to further support locally-led regeneration, including any building on the Community Budgets model.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/regeneration/supportinglocalgrowth>

<sup>2</sup> *Evidence from Central Government into the DCLG Select Committee's Inquiry into Regeneration*, Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2011

<sup>3</sup> [www.communities.gov.uk/news/newsroom/1964311](http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/newsroom/1964311)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/resourcereviewgovtresponse>

<sup>5</sup> *Joint Ventures: a guidance note for public sector bodies forming joint ventures with the private sector*, HM Treasury, 2009

<sup>6</sup> *Capital Investment Regeneration and Joint Ventures Guidance for Local Authorities*, Local Partnerships, 2011

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingsupply/righttoreclaim/>

<sup>8</sup> *Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England*, HM Government, November 2011

<sup>9</sup> The press release can be found at

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/newsroom/2056449>

<sup>10</sup> The Prospectus can be found at

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/communitybudgetspectus>



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