



Devolution proposals for the West Midlands submitted to government

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Ambitious proposals that, if agreed, would see powers devolved from Westminster to the incoming West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) have been submitted to government today (04 Sept).

The Shadow Board for the WMCA has put forward a series of proposals that build on the Statement of Intent launched at the beginning of July.

In a clear sign of its commitment to the West Midlands and the importance of the Midlands Engine to the national economy, the government requested that initial proposals should be submitted today, for consideration in the Spending Review.

The WMCA it will be established by April 2016 and will be the vehicle for delivering the outcomes of any devolution deal.

As part of the devolution negotiation, we are discussing with the government the most appropriate governance structures, including an elected mayor, to be accountable for whatever devolved powers are agreed. We are keeping an open mind on those issues and consider them an intrinsic part of the negotiations.

The submission covers the geography of the three Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) of The Black Country, Coventry and Warwickshire and Greater Birmingham and Solihull.

Whilst the details of the negotiations must remain confidential, the proposals support the WMCA's overall aims of closing both the productivity and the public spending gap, alongside working with the NHS and police and extending a collaborative hand to the region's third sector to use public sector reform to explore innovative programmes of joint working.

They include:

- Significant devolution of funding and financial flexibilities to support a locally controlled ten year investment fund totaling around £8 billion. This will be used to take forward a transport investment plan and explore means of increasing the supply of new development land

- Implementation of the HS2 Growth Strategy, including regeneration around the Curzon (Birmingham city centre) and Interchange HS2 stations
- An integrated new employment and skills system for the West Midlands, supporting school leavers, helping more people into work and providing skills to match the needs of local businesses
- Transformation of public services for “troubled individuals”, including support for people with mental health and reforms to the criminal justice system.

Councillor Bob Sleigh, Chair of the WMCA’s Shadow Board, said:

“As we have progressed with our proposals for devolved powers to the region we have had positive and constructive dialogue with government officials and we are optimistic that our submission to see powers moved from Westminster to the West Midlands will bear fruit.

“We recognise that the government will be considering all budgets in the light of the upcoming Spending Review and that there may be benefits in agreeing an early deal.

“The Shadow Board is ready to rise to the challenges regional devolution will bring to the region. We will maximise the opportunities it offers to improve the outcomes for local people, our businesses and our shared future.”

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