



HOUSE OF LORDS

Liaison Committee

5th Report of Session 2022–23

**The future of seaside
towns**
Follow-up report

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Liaison Committee

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The Members of the Liaison Committee are:

Lord Bach	Earl Howe *
Lord Bichard	Lord Judge (until 27 April 2023)
Lord Blencathra	Earl of Kinnoull (from 28 April 2023)
Lord Collins of Highbury	Baroness Scott of Needham Market
Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Chair)	Lord Taylor of Holbeach
Lord Haskel	Baroness Walmsley

* Earl Howe recused himself on grounds of ministerial propriety

Declaration of interests

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Evidence is published online at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7311/regenerating-seaside-towns-and-communities-followup/publications/> and available for inspection at the Parliamentary Archives (020 7219 3074).

Q in footnotes refers to a question in oral evidence.

SUMMARY

This report follows up a major inquiry by the House of Lords in 2018–19.

Seaside towns and communities remain places with significant potential, but they have still not been enabled to fully realise that potential. We are concerned about the persistent sense of disconnection that seaside communities feel and which has become widespread over recent years. Progress in supporting and investing in these areas has been too slow for too long.

The Government's Levelling up agenda was not in place at the time of the original Committee inquiry. The aspiration to target areas in the most need aligns with the conclusions and recommendations in the 2019 report. We welcome this ambition and commend the positive work carried out by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in their 'deep dive' partnerships, soon to be rolled out in Levelling Up Partnerships across the country. Schemes such as the Partnerships, and others detailed throughout the report, must be reviewed and lessons learned applied to areas with similar challenges. We ask the Government to ensure that this is not a missed opportunity to address the challenges faced in seaside towns and communities which have long been left behind.

Throughout the evidence we received from local authorities we heard about the range of innovative projects being carried out in seaside towns to tackle local challenges, from the development of a Campus for Future Living in Mablethorpe, a future Multiversity in Blackpool and a new community supermarket in Jaywick. This demonstrates the desire from seaside towns to regenerate their areas and implement tailored solutions for their communities. However, we heard repeatedly that more support is needed, particularly better coordination and more suitable investment.

We believe it is necessary for the responsibility for seaside towns and communities to be allocated to a Levelling Up Ministerial portfolio. This will give these areas the recognition they need and add a necessary voice in discussions on levelling up. The Government needs to go further still and must develop a coastal communities strategy to tackle the long-standing disparities entrenched in seaside towns and communities. The strategy will ensure cross-departmental working to implement the necessary changes and encapsulate the range of issues highlighted in this report; transport and digital connectivity, education and health and wellbeing. All are areas where we have seen little progress in seaside towns and communities and persistent, endemic problems. Throughout both reports we have recognised the diversity across seaside towns, but agree with witnesses that these communities have more in common with each other than non-coastal areas: a strategy would be a valuable policy pathway to bring about effective change in coastal areas.

The Government has recognised the complexity of the current funding landscapes and the pitfalls involved in the bidding systems in place. The Government's funding review must establish a clearer and more effectively targeted system. The review needs to acknowledge and address the need for long-term funding to address deep-rooted challenges faced in these areas and create sustainable change in seaside towns and communities.

The move to greater devolution poses an exciting opportunity to enable greater autonomy for local areas to address local concerns. However, this must be tempered with the need to address the distinct common challenges across local authority areas with coastal areas facing different issues to those inland. Coastal communities by virtue of their geography are on the periphery but they must not be left on the edge in terms of focus and priority by new devolved institutions.

The levelling up agenda and the future funding arrangements must better enable coastal areas to both tackle the challenges faced and take advantage of the opportunities presented. We believe our recommendations will help to advance the Government's levelling up agenda and ensure it better supports seaside towns and communities.

The future of seaside towns: *Follow-up report*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. In the Committee's July 2019 report, *Review of House of Lords Investigative and Scrutiny Committees*, a new procedure was established to follow-up the work of special inquiry committees.¹ This report is the Committee's seventh follow-up inquiry and assesses the progress made on the recommendations reached by the Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities report: *The future of seaside towns*.²

The Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities

2. The Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities was appointed on 17 May 2018.³ In the course of the inquiry the Committee carried out six visits to coastal communities in Clacton-on-Sea and Jaywick, Blackpool and Fleetwood, Margate, Skegness, Cornwall and Scarborough. The Select Committee's report was published on 4 April 2019.⁴ The Government response was received on 5 June 2019⁵ and the House of Lords debated the report on 1 July 2019.⁶

Follow-up work

3. The Committee followed up on the Select Committee's recommendations in a letter to the then Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Rt Hon. Robert Jenrick MP, on 17 March 2021.⁷ Luke Hall MP, the then Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government, provided an update on 16 June 2021.⁸
4. Lord Bassam of Brighton, the former Chair of the Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities, requested a follow-up inquiry and on 17 October 2022 the Committee agreed to carry out follow-up in early 2023.⁹

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- 1 Liaison Committee, *Review of House of Lords Investigative and Scrutiny Committees: towards a new thematic committee structure* (6th Report, Session 2017–19, HL Paper 398), para 98
 - 2 Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities, *The future of seaside towns* (Report of Session 2017–19, HL Paper 320)
 - 3 Liaison Committee, *New ad hoc Committees in 2018–19* (2nd Report, Session 2017–19, HL Paper 103)
 - 4 *The future of seaside towns*
 - 5 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, *Government response to the Report of Session 2017–19 of House of Lords' Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities Select Committee on The Future of Seaside Towns*, CP 102 (5 June 2019): https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/lords-committees/Regenerating-Seaside-Towns/Government_response.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]
 - 6 HL Deb, 1 July 2019, [cols 1279–1330](#)
 - 7 Letter from the Rt Hon. the Lord McFall of Alcluith, the then Chair of the Liaison Committee, to the Rt Hon. Robert Jenrick MP, the then Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (17 March 2021): <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/5130/documents/50651/default/>
 - 8 Letter from Luke Hall MP, the then Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government, to Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Chair of the Liaison Committee (16 June 2021): <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/6637/documents/71493/default/>
 - 9 Liaison Committee, *Decisions Document* (17 October 2022): <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/33285/documents/180178/default/> [accessed 15 May 2023]

5. The Committee held three evidence sessions across 20 and 28 March 2023. The Committee was joined by four former members of the Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities: Lord Bassam of Brighton, Lord McNally, Baroness Valentine and Baroness Wyld. Lord Lucas attended on behalf of Baroness Wyld on 28 March 2023. The names of Members are recorded in Appendix 1 and witnesses in Appendix 2.
6. The Committee also requested written evidence from key stakeholders including the local authorities who were visited by the Select Committee on Regeneration Seaside Towns and Communities. We are grateful to those local authorities who were able to submit written evidence and to all our witnesses and written evidence submitters for their contribution to our inquiry.
7. Although the issues faced by seaside towns and communities are complex and interlinked, the remit of follow-up inquiries is to focus on selected areas and as a result this report considers the following matters:
 - Coastal communities policy and coordination;
 - Funding and delivery of regeneration;
 - Connectivity, both transport and digital;
 - Education; and
 - Health and wellbeing.

CHAPTER 2: PROGRESS ON KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Coastal communities policy and coordination

The Levelling Up Agenda

8. At the time of *The future of seaside towns* report, the levelling up agenda, as we know it today, had not been established. It was outlined in the 2019 Conservative Manifesto as a means of addressing the entrenched geographical disparities faced across the UK and ensuring that opportunities are spread more equally and fairly.¹⁰ The original inquiry noted that coastal areas have been “neglected for too long”¹¹ and as a result this intention to address these long-standing issues is a positive one.
9. In 2021 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the lead Government Department for the Select Committee’s inquiry, was renamed the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) with the intention of “delivering tangible improvements in every part of the UK”.¹²
10. The Levelling Up White Paper, published in February 2022, set out the Government’s plan to tackle disparities and established 12 missions with clear timeframes to target key areas of change. This report addresses a number of these missions. The Levelling Up White Paper does not have a direct focus or strategy to address the challenges faced by coastal areas, but does recognise that seaside towns are amongst those areas that have the “highest levels of community need and poor opportunities for the people who grow up there”.¹³ Despite this acknowledgement, the Government has elected to take a broad approach to the challenges faced across the country rather than focusing on coastal areas which share similar issues and barriers.
11. Dehenna Davison MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Levelling Up) in DLUHC, set out that coastal communities are not “entirely homogenous” and as a result the broad levelling up agenda is needed.¹⁴ She referenced that individual coastal areas would prioritise concerns differently and therefore a broader view is the correct approach. She told us that despite a lack of focus on coastal communities, the 12 levelling up missions “will hit a large number of coastal communities.”¹⁵
12. However, we share the view of Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer for England at the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), set out in the *Chief Medical Officer’s annual report 2021: health in coastal communities*, that although each seaside town and community:

“ ... is shaped by its own unique history and culture. They do, however, share many similar characteristics, which should help some common policy responses. A resort town like Blackpool, for example, has more in

10 Conservatives, ‘Conservative Party Manifesto 2019’: <https://www.conservatives.com/our-plan/conservative-party-manifesto-2019> [accessed 15 May 2023]

11 *The future of seaside towns*, page 3

12 Written Statement [HCWS309](#), Session 2021–22

13 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, *Levelling Up: Levelling Up the United Kingdom*, CP 604 (2 February 2022) p xv: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1052708/Levelling_up_the_UK_white_paper.pdf [accessed 15 May 2023]

14 [Q 23](#) (Dehenna Davison MP)

15 [Q 23](#) (Dehenna Davison MP)

common with Hastings, Skegness or Torbay than with Preston, just 18 miles inland.”¹⁶

Alan Cavill, Director of Communication and Regeneration at Blackpool Council, reiterated this, telling the Committee that in his region the needs of inland areas are “very different” to those at the coast.¹⁷ The Centre for Coastal Communities at the University of Plymouth agreed and highlighted that local authority areas often include both inland and coastal areas that lack that commonality.¹⁸

13. Levelling up spans a vast range of initiatives, from funding streams to place-based interventions, and from education to devolution. This breadth is needed to tackle levelling up across the country. However, our seaside towns and communities face a particular set of challenges with regard to continuing connectivity issues, the standard and availability of education, the changing physical environment in terms of coastal erosion and flooding, and a decline in traditional local industries. The levelling up agenda may prove too blunt an instrument to effectively target these areas.

Mechanism for coordination

14. The Select Committee found that the Government needed a “more strategic approach to the co-ordination of coastal communities’ policy at official-level across different government departments” and recommended the cross-Whitehall official level meeting to discuss coastal communities be reinstated.¹⁹
15. The Government accepted the Select Committee’s recommendation and committed to reinstating these meetings. In June 2021 the then Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government at MHCLG, Luke Hall MP, informed the Committee that the cross-Whitehall official level meeting had been reinstated, with the first meeting held on 18 November 2019—however due to the need to focus on the pandemic no further meetings had taken place.²⁰ The Minister told us that these meetings have not restarted since the pandemic and they do not currently intend to re-establish the meetings.²¹
16. The Minister and officials explained that there is now an interministerial group (IMG) on levelling up.²² The IMG facilitates discussion between Ministers from every government department around a specific topic. It is unclear the level of formal authority the IMG holds in terms of implementing decisions and effecting change. The Minister spoke to the effectiveness of the IMG “to galvanise movement”,²³ setting out that the recent Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan “largely came out of the [IMG] meeting”.²⁴ The IMG on levelling up considers the broad levelling up agenda rather than having

16 Chief Medical Officer, *Chief Medical Officer’s Annual Report 2021 Health in Coastal Communities* (July 2021) p 3: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005216/cmo-annual_report-2021-health-in-coastal-communities-accessible.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

17 [Q 7](#) (Alan Cavill)

18 Written evidence from the Centre for Coastal Communities, University of Plymouth ([RST0004](#))

19 *The future of seaside towns*, para 326

20 Letter from Luke Hall MP, the then Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government, to Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Chair of the Liaison Committee (16 June 2021): <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/6637/documents/71493/default/>

21 [Q 28](#) (Dehenna Davison MP)

22 [Q 24](#) (Will Garton)

23 [Q 24](#) (Dehenna Davison MP)

24 [Q 35](#) (Dehenna Davison MP)

a coastal communities' lens, though the Minister highlighted that coastal communities could be a topic for the Group to discuss.²⁵

17. Blackpool Council, in both its written and oral evidence, praised the work of DLUHC in working with them to bring about change in their local area. The Council explained DLUHC officials have been “committed, attentive and responsive” with the “strong, positive working relationship unlocking the delivery of specific projects”.²⁶ Blackpool is in a different position to many seaside towns and communities as it was a ‘deep dive’ pilot location for the Levelling Up Partnerships Scheme which was rolled out at the Spring Budget 2023. However, this beneficial working relationship sends a positive message to other areas of the intention and will to bring about change.
18. Alan Cavill explained that the Council believes “you have to make it easy for government to support you.”²⁷ He highlighted the Blackpool Town Prospectus which “everybody in the town is signed up to ... which has a simple set of asks.”²⁸ The Prospectus asked that government should work with the town strategically to achieve their goals.
19. Although witnesses recognised the initiatives in place and the investment funds available and the positive impact this has had, across the evidence the Committee heard it was felt not enough had improved for seaside towns and communities since the Select Committee’s report was published in 2019. Alan Cavill told us that, although “an awful lot is happening on the ground” in his locality, “many of the issues that exist for seaside towns about skills, transport, the remoteness and so on are all pretty much the same.”²⁹ Daniel Davies, Chief Executive and Founder of Rockpoint Leisure and Chair of the Institute of Licensing, echoed this, telling the Committee he hoped things would be further on.³⁰ Both Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts, Lead Officer at the Local Government Association (LGA) Coastal Special Interest Group (SIG) and the Centre of Coastal Communities at the University of Plymouth highlighted the disparities between different seaside towns and communities with some having received investment and seeing real progress and others that continue to struggle.³¹
20. In January 2023, the *Communities on the edge* report was published with the aim of determining the scale of the levelling up challenge faced in coastal areas and identifying opportunities for growth. The report was commissioned and funded by a range of coastal interest groups including the Coastal Communities Alliance, Coastal Partnerships Network, LGA Coastal SIG and a number of local authorities. In order for coastal communities to benefit from the levelling up agenda and create effective leadership the report called for:
 - A dedicated coastal minister; and

25 [Q 28](#) (Dehenna Davison MP)

26 Written evidence from Blackpool Council ([RST0002](#))

27 [Q 3](#) (Alan Cavill)

28 [Q 3](#) (Alan Cavill)

29 [Q 2](#) (Alan Cavill)

30 [Q 2](#) (Daniel Davies)

31 [Q 2](#) (Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts) and the Centre for Coastal Communities, University of Plymouth ([RST0004](#))

- A cross-departmental coastal taskforce.³²
21. Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts reiterated the *Communities on the edge* report recommendations and explained the difficulty of not having a Minister with central responsibility for the coast.³³ Tendring District Council and Essex County Council also called for the Government to consider a coastal minister and requested a “cross government task group focused on unique coastal areas that need targeted intervention and local flexibilities.”³⁴
 22. The Minister set out why a Coastal Minister may not be the most effective mechanism to support coastal communities:

“there could then be a call for a Minister specifically for non-coastal rural communities or inner city communities. We do not want to end up with lots of people who are doing very important work focused on their specific communities but where there may be a lot of crossover on the particular challenges ... I am not sure that would necessarily be the best use of their time, officials’ time or, frankly, taxpayers’ money. I would rather see us focus in a much more holistic way”.³⁵
 23. The Centre for Coastal Communities at the University of Plymouth asked for “a national coastal strategy and evidence-based policy unit”.³⁶ The Centre argued that this would overcome the challenge of working across government departments and collaborating with key stakeholders. In September 2021 the LGA Coastal SIG and Maritime UK published a Coastal Powerhouse Manifesto concluding that “there is no coherent significant Government strategy for meeting the needs and realising the potential of coastal areas.”³⁷
 24. The Committee agrees that more needs to be done to focus, prioritise and support coastal areas to ensure the levelling up agenda can help these areas and bring about sustainable long-term change.
 25. ***The Committee believes greater coordination and recognition is needed for seaside towns and communities. The Committee recommends that the Government allocates responsibility for seaside towns and communities to a Ministerial portfolio in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. This will create a point of reference for local areas and key stakeholders, and demonstrate the importance of these areas in achieving the levelling up agenda.***
 26. ***The Minister with this portfolio should attend all meetings of the interministerial group on Levelling Up to ensure that a coastal lens can be applied to the topics discussed.***

32 Pragmatix Advisory for the Coastal Communities Alliance, Coastal Partners, Coastal Partnerships Network, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Essex County Council, Greater Lincolnshire LEP, LGA Coastal SIG, Lincolnshire County Council, National Coastal Tourism Academy, North East Lincolnshire Council, South Tyneside Council and Torbay Council, *Communities on the edge* (January 2023) p 113: <https://www.coastalcommunities.co.uk/knowledge-base/category/reports/communities-on-the-edge> [accessed 15 May 2023]

33 **Q 4** (Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts)

34 Written evidence from Tendring District Council and Essex County Council (**RST0003**)

35 **Q 29** (Dehenna Davison MP)

36 Written evidence from the Centre for Coastal Communities University of Plymouth (**RST0004**)

37 Maritime UK, ‘Coastal Powerhouse Manifesto’: <https://www.maritimeuk.org/week/politicians/coastal-powerhouse-manifesto/> [accessed 12 May 2023]

27. ***The Committee has heard again about the distinctive set of challenges faced by coastal communities. The Government should work with the Local Government Association, coastal interest groups, the private sector, the third sector and other key stakeholders to develop a coastal communities strategy in order to demonstrate clear mechanisms to successfully address the long-standing disparities faced by seaside towns and communities. A draft strategy should be put to the House of Commons Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee to ensure effective scrutiny of the strategy ahead of implementation. This work should be started as a matter of urgency to ensure that disparities do not become further entrenched.***

Support for regeneration—leadership

28. Effective leadership is essential to ensure regeneration projects can be successfully prioritised, funded and delivered. The original inquiry heard about the range of sources this leadership can come from, but in particular the role of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) given their responsibility for local economic development. The Select Committee noted concerns that LEPs tended “to favour reinforcing and building on known successes rather than tackling more problematic and marginalised areas, such as seaside towns.” The 2019 report concluded that LEPs had “failed to deliver their core objective—to promote local economic growth”.³⁸
29. The inquiry’s conclusions and recommendations largely focused on the role of LEPs in developing Local Industrial Strategies and managing funding streams. LEPs had responsibilities for the delivery of European Structural and Investment Funds, but they were not granted a role in subsequent and replacement funding streams such as the Towns Fund, Levelling Up Fund and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
30. The 2022 Levelling Up White Paper acknowledged the role and work of LEPs but also highlighted the disparity in the capacity and capability of LEPs across the country.³⁹ The White Paper set out the Government’s plan to integrate LEPs’ functions and business boards into local authorities.⁴⁰ The Government subsequently published guidance to support this transition and recognised the complexities involved as a result of both the differing local authority structures and geographical boundaries that span LEP areas. The guidance recognised the need for a case-by-case approach.⁴¹ Integration had already begun taking place in the Greater London Authority (GLA) with the London LEP, the London Economic Action Partnership (LEAP), being partially integrated into the GLA. The LEAP was fully integrated into the GLA in March 2023.
31. The Spring Budget 2023 announced that the Government is “minded to” remove central government support for LEPs from April 2024. The

38 *The future of seaside towns*, para 291

39 *Levelling Up: Levelling Up the United Kingdom*, p 87

40 *Levelling Up: Levelling Up the United Kingdom*, p 146

41 Letter from Neil O’Brien MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary for Levelling Up, The Union and Constitution, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Paul Scully MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets), Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy to LEP Chairs, combined authority mayors and the Mayor of London (31 March 2022): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1066191/Letter-and-Guidance-on-integrating-Local-Enterprise-Partnerships-LEPs-into-local-democratic-institutions.pdf [accessed 12 May 2023]

Chancellor confirmed that DLUHC and the Department for Business and Trade would consult on these proposals, with the intention to confirm a decision by the summer.⁴²

32. The announcements of changes to LEPs received a mixed reception. Some welcomed the opportunity to work within devolved structures, calling it “unvarnished good news”.⁴³ Others have expressed concern about how local private sector businesses will be able to input to local decision making in future.⁴⁴ Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts fed back that:

“some councils say that it is good for the LEP to be going into the council, and they can see a real strength and positivity from that. Others are concerned that some of the people in those LEPs will disappear within the councils and might not be at the forefront.”⁴⁵

33. The LEP Network currently acts as the central voice for LEPs and leads on negotiations with government and other stakeholders on the policy and future work of LEPs. Of the latest announcement in the Spring Budget 2023, the Chair of the LEP Network, Mark Bretton, said:

“To say we remain puzzled as to why Government wants to put at risk a growth engine that has worked so well for them is an understatement, but if that is what they want let’s get this done professionally, in a timely fashion and with respect.”⁴⁶

34. The need for a well-placed network to build working relationships and enable information sharing was recognised in the 2019 report, as the Select Committee recommended a “formalised network of coastal LEPs” be established to “facilitate greater collaboration” between LEPs in coastal areas.⁴⁷ Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts informed us that after the 2019 report a network of coastal LEPs had come together. Rebecca expressed concern that after gaining this “bridge” it could be lost when LEPs functions are incorporated into local authorities.⁴⁸
35. DLUHC and Department for Business and Trade have launched the information gathering exercise to assess the impact of the proposed withdrawal of LEP funding with a questionnaire due to close on 19 May 2023.⁴⁹ DLUHC committed to “work with local areas and LEPs to manage

42 HM Treasury, *Spring Budget 2023*, HC 1183 (15 March 2023) p 70: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1144441/Web_accessible_Budget_2023.pdf [accessed 12 May 2023]

43 LEP Network, ‘Future value of LEPs embedded in levelling-up policy’: <https://www.lepnetwork.net/news-and-events/2022/february-2022/future-value-of-leps-embedded-in-levelling-up-policy/> [accessed 12 May 2023]

44 ‘Local Enterprise Partnerships: the cherished business network under threat from the devolution agenda’, *The Times* (22 April 2022): available at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/local-enterprise-partnerships-the-cherished-business-network-under-threat-from-devolution-agenda-f6t39db8t>

45 Q 9 (Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts)

46 LEP Network, ‘Silencing the voice of local business will cost money not save it’: <https://www.lepnetwork.net/news-and-events/2023/march-2023/silencing-the-voice-of-local-business-will-cost-money-not-save-it/> [accessed 12 May 2023]

47 *The future of seaside towns*, para 294

48 Q 9 (Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts)

49 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Department for Business and Trade, ‘Local Enterprise Partnerships—Future Funding Questionnaire’: <https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=EGG0v32c3kOociSi7zmVqHDc0azOsTVMhvLwOHfwis9UQkM3UUw2TTNGRDZIM0VHVzVBOVzkNUE4USQIQCN0PWcu&web=1&wdLOR=cEF7A272B-2729-4705-BDE1-B3721B45C0E2> [accessed 12 May 2023]

the transition should the decision to cease LEP core funding be taken forward.”⁵⁰

36. **The Committee recognises the complexity of the challenge faced in integrating LEPs into local democratic institutions and welcomes the further consultation being carried out to ensure future integration and funding changes can be managed effectively. We encourage the Government to respond promptly to the findings to give clarity for both LEPs and local authorities. The work achieved by LEPs and the ongoing work they are part of must not be lost as the transition takes place.**
37. *The Committee believes the relationship between local authorities and the private sector is integral to the regeneration of seaside towns and communities and we urge the Government to ensure that this is not lost as local authorities begin to undertake the functions of LEPs. The private sector must be kept informed by local democratic institutions what form these new integrated responsibilities will take so they have a clear understanding of how to maintain their involvement in the development of local communities. The new structures integrating LEP responsibilities must facilitate frank and open input from local businesses.*
38. *The Committee continues to believe that any structures responsible for the leadership of the development and economic growth of areas with a coastal aspect should ensure there is an emphasis on addressing the needs of coastal communities. Coastal communities and their needs and priorities must not be lost amid broader local authority economic agendas, both national and local.*
39. *The need for collaboration and information sharing across areas which face similar challenges, such as seaside towns and communities, remains essential. The Government should consider how the valuable work of networks can be built into the planned integration of LEPs into local authorities. The Government must consult the Local Government Association and interested parties to consider how information sharing and a collective voice can be created for this new integrated structure.*

Devolution

40. The Select Committee recognised the “crucial role” of local authorities in enabling long-term regeneration by working with business and community leaders to provide “vision, leadership and enforcement, enabling partnerships and setting a favourable planning environment”.⁵¹
41. Since the Select Committee’s report, the levelling up agenda has placed renewed emphasis on granting greater powers to local authorities. The Levelling Up White Paper establishes the Government’s intention to ensure “by 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution and a simplified,

50 Supplementary written evidence from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (RST0007)

51 *The future of seaside towns*, page 3

long-term funding settlement.”⁵² The Government wants to enable local leaders to “develop local solutions to local problems.”⁵³

42. The Government intends to do this through:

- New County Deals—Since the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper, provisional deals have been agreed in Cornwall (county deal), North East (Mayoral Combined Authority); Norfolk (county deal); Suffolk (county deal); East Midlands (the first combined county authority a new governance structure to be established by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill) and York and North Yorkshire (mayoral combined authority).
- Extending powers of existing Mayors—Trailblazer deals have been agreed with the Greater Manchester and West Midlands Combined Authorities to provide greater autonomy and a single multi-year funding settlement at the next Spending Review. These deals will provide a blueprint for future deeper devolution roll out across England.
- Simplifying the devolution landscape—the production of a devolution framework for England.

43. The evidence received suggests a mixed view of the benefits proposed devolution changes will bring to seaside towns and communities. Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts told us that local authorities “are really excited” and see changes as a “real opportunity” to “drive digital, infrastructure, transport and those different abilities for connectivity.”⁵⁴ This was echoed in evidence from Tendring District Council and Essex County Council who saw greater devolution as having “the potential to bring together local levers of growth to support coastal areas in delivering long-term sustainable change.”⁵⁵

44. However, Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts did reflect that there is a “tentativeness” regarding whether the devolution changes will deliver for coastal areas.⁵⁶ The South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership were concerned that:

“the large scale local government devolution reform proposed will be at a level in terms of heterogenous geographies such as rural counties, which runs the risk of locking minority coastal areas into systems of limited influence and investment, perpetuating their relative neglect.”⁵⁷

The South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership has created its own model to bring about local change: “a unique 3 District leadership model covering Boston, East Lindsey and South Holland has been created to unlock growth through place-based decision making.”⁵⁸

45. Alan Cavill reflected the contradictions felt in this area, welcoming “anything that brings more power to the local level” as “there simply is not enough control at local level.” But he also noted that the geographies of certain areas with both coastal and inland areas can make this complex as in these areas

52 *Levelling Up: Levelling Up the United Kingdom*, p 234

53 *Levelling Up: Levelling Up the United Kingdom*, p 233

54 Q 6 (Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts)

55 Written evidence from Tendring District Council and Essex County Council ([RST0003](#))

56 Q 6 (Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts)

57 Written evidence from South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership ([RST0001](#))

58 Written evidence from South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership ([RST0001](#))

it is “difficult to see how all their priorities can fit together in a combined authority”.⁵⁹

46. The Minister noted that the devolution deals made to date with coastal areas have included a variety of priorities within their remit to focus on coastal needs:
- North East Deal—Strategic Infrastructure Plan to assess how the coastline can be protected;
 - Cornwall Deal—Includes reference to floating offshore wind and how the local area can support and benefit from this;
 - Norfolk Deal and Suffolk Deal—includes a focus on promoting visitor economies; and
 - York and North Yorkshire Deal—considering the role of coastal areas in achieving net zero.⁶⁰
47. Daniel Davies felt further devolution was in principle “a good idea”, but reflected that the local institutions themselves will have a significant bearing on the outcome of greater devolution and these powers should go “to the right people on a forward-thinking, visionary sort of council”.⁶¹ The Minister acknowledged the need for “good working practices internally and good local relationships” to take on these additional devolved responsibilities and noted in the exploratory stages of a devolution deal the Government has asked to “review the cross-authority governance structures because at the moment they do not seem to be working as effectively as they can.”⁶² We are reassured by this detailed assessment of future devolution deals. However, it is imperative for Government to set out clear pathways for local authorities to establish the necessary structures to enable devolution deals to proceed. The Government has published an English Devolution Accountability Framework which sets out how devolution deals will be scrutinised and held to account.⁶³
48. **The Committee welcomes steps to grant greater powers to local areas to enable greater place-based decision making. It remains essential that coastal towns and communities are not lost amongst the challenges and competing concerns that local authorities face, so future deals and local authority arrangements should reflect the needs of seaside towns and communities in their remit and appropriate geographical area.**

Support for regeneration—funding and delivery

Government funding

Coastal Communities Fund

49. At the time of the Select Committee’s report, the Coastal Communities Fund (CCF) was still providing a dedicated source of funding for coastal areas.

59 Q 7 (Alan Cavill)

60 Q 23 (Dehenna Davison MP)

61 Q 7 (Daniel Davies)

62 Q 30 (Dehenna Davison MP)

63 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, ‘English Devolution Accountability Framework’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-accountability-framework> [accessed 9 May 2023]

The evidence received about the CCF was largely positive, but concern was expressed regarding the bidding process involved, the difficulty posed by the short-term nature of the fund to effect sustainable change and the need for its impact to be evaluated.

50. The Select Committee recommended that if the CCF evaluation demonstrated “sustained economic and social improvements for seaside towns” then this dedicated funding should continue. Further to this, if the CCF was found to be an effective financial support the Crown Estates revenue ratio should be increased to its original 50% with consideration of whether this should increase in the future.⁶⁴ The Committee also determined that if dedicated funding continues the CCF should focus on sustainable place-based approaches to regeneration.⁶⁵
51. The CCF ran for nine years from 2012 to 2021, and granted £229 million in funding to 369 coastal projects across the UK. Across the five funding rounds, £182.9 million was invested in England to over 180 projects in England.⁶⁶
52. In response to the 2019 report, the Government carried out an evaluation of the CCF in England and the final report published in May 2022 concluded:
 - The rationale for the Fund was found to be sound as coastal areas had not received the focus that former industrial cities had seen.
 - The programme can reasonably “be said to have contributed to job growth and prosperity”.
 - The participants fed back “strong support” for the CCF.⁶⁷
53. Despite the positive outcome of the CCF evaluation, the Government does not plan to conduct further CCF rounds across the UK. In September 2022, Sally-Ann Hart MP, the Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Coastal Communities, called for the CCF be reinstated. The Minister emphasised the current focus is on the wider levelling up agenda rather than on specific dedicated funds.⁶⁸
54. Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts expressed concern regarding the removal of the CCF and the lack of transparency regarding its incorporation into the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, in particular around whether the ratio from Crown Estate revenue was reduced or if any of the fund had been ringfenced.⁶⁹
55. DLUHC told us that at the time of the CCF there were “fewer government funding programmes available to help regenerate coastal and other communities in the UK.”⁷⁰

64 *The future of seaside towns*, para 316

65 *The future of seaside towns*, para 321

66 Supplementary written evidence from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (RST0007)

67 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, *Evaluation of the Coastal Communities Fund Final Report* (May 2022): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1085874/Coastal_Communities_Fund_evaluation_report.pdf [accessed 12 May 2023]

68 HC Debate, 8 September 2022, cols 181WH-204WH

69 Q 4 (Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts)

70 Supplementary written evidence from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (RST0007)

Coastal Revival Fund

56. Further dedicated coastal funding was granted through the competitive Coastal Revival Fund aiming to “unlock the economic potential of hard-to-tackle buildings, facilities and amusements such as piers, lidos and promenades”. The Coastal Revival Fund ran from 2015 to 2019 providing 184 successful projects with £7.5million of funding.⁷¹

Towns Fund

57. In March 2019 the Government announced the £1.6 billion Stronger Towns Fund to target areas that have faced geographical disparities compared to more affluent areas. The Select Committee supported this approach, but highlighted that “limited funding will not address the generational challenges that are so entrenched in these areas”. The 2019 report recommended that the Government should secure Town Deals for Blackpool and other deprived seaside towns.⁷² The Stronger Towns Fund was subsequently incorporated into the Towns Fund, a £3.6 billion fund divided between three funds; the Towns Fund to develop Town Deals, a secondary fund for towns not eligible under the initial Town Deals to bid for a Town Deal, and the Future High Streets Fund to support town centre regeneration.
58. The Government identified towns that would be invited to bid for funding to establish a Town Deal based on an assessment of local need and growth. Of the 101 towns selected for Town Deals, 22 were coastal towns and received £523.4 million in investment. These towns included Blackpool, Margate, Penzance and St Ives, Redcar, Scarborough, Skegness, Torquay and Whitby.⁷³ The Town Deal process was subject to criticism regarding how towns were selected, and as a result the National Audit Office published the full details of the selection process.⁷⁴
59. The South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership told us “The sort of change to increase the value and depth of the economy which we desire in the longer term is being addressed through the ground breaking town deal investments”.⁷⁵ They explained that:
- “Towns Fund investment is having a major transformational impact on the development of the core settlements on our coast, enabling us to diversify our economy around medi-tech, extend the post 16 learning offer radically and broaden the nature and appeal of our cultural and visitor offer.”⁷⁶
60. The secondary fund for towns not initially eligible to develop Town Deals is yet to be released or further information provided.
61. The Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) was established to support the implementation of long-term strategies to support the regeneration of town

71 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, ‘Coastal Revival Fund: an invitation to apply for funding’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coastal-revival-fund-an-invitation-to-apply-for-funding> [accessed 12 May 2023]

72 *The future of seaside towns*, paras 338 and 339

73 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, ‘Town Deals: full list of 101 offers’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/town-deals-full-list-of-101-offers> [accessed 12 May 2023]

74 Institute for Government, ‘Towns Fund’: <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/article/explainer/towns-fund> [accessed 13 June 2023]

75 Written evidence from South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (RST0001)

76 Written evidence from South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (RST0001)

centres. The FHSF initially had funding of £675 million but this was increased to £1 billion in July 2019. Funding was allocated in a competitive bidding process with 13 coastal areas receiving £149.7 million. This brings the total funding received in coastal areas under the Towns Fund to over £673 million.⁷⁷

62. DLUHC has set a clear monitoring and evaluation strategy to assess the impact of the Towns Fund as a whole and recognised this will “enable learning”.⁷⁸

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

63. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) had been announced in 2017 prior to the Select Committee’s report but the details of the fund were yet to be finalised. The UKSPF is intended to act as a successor to the European Structural and Investment Funds which provided funding to reduce disparities prior to the UK’s departure from the European Union.

64. The 2019 report concluded that the UKSPF was a “key opportunity to help support coastal business development ... and to tackle deprivation in coastal communities”. The Committee asked the Government to set out how coastal areas would benefit from the UKSPF and to conduct meaningful consultation with these areas to ensure that the UKSPF would effectively support seaside towns and communities.⁷⁹ The Government Response confirmed that the Government carried out public consultation throughout the design of the UKSPF.

65. As the UKSPF did not start until 2022, the UK Community Renewal Fund (UKCRF) was introduced in May 2021 as a bridge between the funding streams. The UKCRF aimed to encourage innovative approaches to achieve goals, and support and prepare local areas ahead of the UKSPF commencing. The UKCRF was distributed through a competitive bidding process which would be evaluated alongside a list of 100 places which had been identified as investment priorities based on an assessment of economic resilience. The priority places included a number of coastal areas, including all the locations the Committee visited during its inquiry. The fund ran from 2021–22 allocating £220million across 225 successful bids.⁸⁰ Tendring District Council and Essex County Council told us:

“The programme was short term, and whilst it had some notable successes in addressing areas of concern, it did not dovetail into the UKSPF as UKSPF skills funding comes in two years after the end of this funding stream.”⁸¹

66. The UKSPF was launched in April 2022 with a fund of £2.6 billion to be distributed across a three year funding period from 2022 to March 2025. The UKSPF is intended to build pride in place and to improve the life

77 Supplementary written evidence from Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities ([RST0007](#))

78 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, ‘Towns Fund monitoring and evaluation strategy’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/towns-fund-monitoring-and-evaluation-strategy> [accessed 12 May 2023]

79 *The future of seaside towns*, paras 299, 300 and 322

80 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, ‘UK Community Renewal Fund: successful and unsuccessful bids’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund-successful-bids> [accessed 12 May 2023]

81 Written evidence from Tendring District Council and Essex County Council ([RST0003](#))

chances across the UK, prioritising community and place, local businesses and people and skills. Unlike the previous funds discussed, the UKSPF is a non-competitive fund with funding allocated by formula across all areas in the UK through local authorities. The allocation mechanism considers the distributions received under the European Union Structural and Investment Funds, the priority places approach used in the UKCRF including consideration of higher cost of delivering services in rural areas with lower population density. Lead local authorities will have responsibility for developing an investment plan to utilise the UKSPF allocation received, and manage and deliver the outcomes identified. The Government has set out a clear evaluation strategy to assess how far the UKSPF has achieved its goals.⁸²

67. Lead local authorities, either located in or serving coastal areas, received £400 million of core UKSPF funding in England and £86 million in Scotland. Wales and Northern Ireland are allocated the UKSPF in a different format.⁸³
68. The South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership explained that “The provision of UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural Prosperity Funding have enabled [them] to begin to build on some of the opportunities to diversify the community capacity, skills and enterprise deficits facing the area.”⁸⁴
69. However, Blackpool Council explained that under the UKSPF:

“coastal communities have received a smaller proportion of funding than via the previous EU regime. This is because they can tend to be smaller than inland conurbations within LEP areas but suffer relatively higher levels of deprivation.”⁸⁵
70. Alan Cavill also criticised the short-term nature of the UKSPF, setting out due to the timeframes involved the funding is essentially “two and a bit years of funding. It is very hard to make projects fit within that.”⁸⁶
71. Blackpool Council called for:

“A methodology for the distribution of Shared Prosperity Fund monies that recognises the unique challenges faced by coastal communities that are often smaller and more isolated.”⁸⁷

Levelling Up Fund

72. The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund (LUF) was announced in the Spending Review 2020 and was established to provide “investment in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities and will support economic recovery”.⁸⁸ The Government ranked local authorities using an assessment of their need for economic recovery and growth, the

82 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, ‘UK Shared Prosperity Fund: evaluation’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-evaluation> [accessed 12 May 2023]

83 Supplementary written evidence from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (RST0007)

84 Written evidence from South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (RST0001)

85 Written evidence from Blackpool Council (RST0002)

86 Q 5 (Alan Cavill)

87 Written evidence from Blackpool Council (RST0002)

88 HM Treasury, *Spending Review 2020*, CP330 (November 2020): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938052/SR20_Web_Accessible.pdf [accessed 12 May 2023]

need for improved transport connectivity, and the need for regeneration. All local authorities were eligible to submit at least one bid with capacity funding to support the production of LUF bids available for those local authority ranked with the greatest need.

73. To date the LUF has invested over £3.8 billion, over two rounds, in 216 projects across the country. Coastal areas have received £1 billion to support 50 projects in coastal areas.⁸⁹ This includes funding in Clacton-on-Sea to develop a brownfield site to build 28 new affordable homes, in Blackpool to develop a new carbon neutral multiversity and in Cornwall for a direct train service to link Newquay, St Austell, Truro and Falmouth.
74. The Government has confirmed it plans to run a third round of the LUF later in 2023 but further details are yet to be announced.
75. The LUF has been subject to criticism, the Institute for Government stating that the LUF “is neither large enough nor targeted enough to regenerate left-behind regions” as the Fund value is “much smaller than the more than £10 billion cut to local government spending power since 2010”.⁹⁰
76. Submissions received also referenced further funds including the Rural England Prosperity Fund, Welcome Back Fund, the Arts Council Cultural Development Fund and the Community Ownership Fund amongst others. This further demonstrates the complexity of the funding landscape.

Funding landscape

77. The funding packages received have been welcomed by seaside towns and communities. Local authorities provided us with a plethora of examples of the work and projects that they have been able to start as a result of the funding received, from innovative new education solutions such as the Campus for Future Living in Mablethorpe to establishing the Jaywick Community Supermarket to support families on lower incomes.⁹¹ Blackpool Council noted it “has witnessed a quickening pace of change, unarguably aided by the availability of substantial funding streams”.⁹²
78. South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership explained the “major progress” seen through funds like the UKSPF, Towns Fund and the Levelling Up Fund has been possible due to “having a unit of implementation close to the local people served, which is accountable to them and insightful in terms of their geography and the issues within which it is based.”⁹³

89 Supplementary written evidence from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities ([RST0007](#))

90 Institute for Government, ‘The Levelling Up Fund will not deliver on the government’s flagship agenda’: <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/comment/levelling-up-fund> [accessed 12 May 2023]

91 Written evidence from South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership ([RST0001](#)), Blackpool Council ([RST0002](#)) and Tendring District Council and Essex County Council ([RST0003](#))

92 Written evidence from Blackpool Council ([RST0002](#))

93 Written evidence from South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership ([RST0001](#))

79. However, witnesses raised a number of concerns regarding the funding streams currently available:

- The number of funds available—Blackpool Council told us the funding currently available represents a “piecemeal and short-term approach to problem solving”.⁹⁴
- The inconsistency in the funding received by some coastal areas in comparison to others—Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts noted this was “chalk and cheese” with some areas receiving substantial funds, whereas others have not benefited and are struggling as a result.⁹⁵ Daniel Davies noted that to ensure that these coastal areas receive the funding they need there “could be a dedicated coastal seaside town fund that had to be spent there, or a certain percentage that had to be earmarked.”⁹⁶
- The amount of funding available—Blackpool Council explained that the current funding landscape is “no replacement for the core organisational funding lost since 2010.”⁹⁷
- The restrictive nature of the funds criteria—Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts set out that:

“If you get a pot of money to deliver one thing and you know that, to deliver that one thing, actually you need to do something else, you cannot use that money; you cannot move it over. The criteria are so restrictive.”⁹⁸

Rebecca called for funding to be focused on achieving an objective enabling a number of workstreams, rather than on individual projects.

- The resources involved in accessing funding—there was unanimous concern expressed by witnesses regarding the significant workload, time and cost involved in accessing funds.⁹⁹ Local authorities are expending a large amount of resources to draw up bids and the plans needed to meet the funding programme requirements, and sometimes to no end. Blackpool Council noted that even non-competitive funds such as the UKSPF involved substantial resource to complete the necessary documentation.¹⁰⁰ Witnesses also raised the additional costs involved where local authorities need additional support, often in the form of consultants, which escalates costs further.
- The short-term nature of the funding available. This was a primary concern heard across our witnesses: that short-term funding is not sufficient to bring about sustained change in coastal areas. Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts and Alan Cavill agreed that the short-term nature of the current funding available is not long enough to enable effective regeneration. Rebecca called for funding to be over a 7 or even 9 year period.¹⁰¹ Alan set out that receiving the same amount of funding that

94 Written evidence from Blackpool Council ([RST0002](#))

95 [Q 2](#) (Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts)

96 [Q 3](#) (Daniel Davies)

97 Written evidence from Blackpool Council ([RST0002](#))

98 [Q 3](#) (Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts)

99 [Q 3](#), [Q 5](#) (Alan Cavill, Daniel Davies, Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts)

100 Written evidence from Blackpool Council ([RST0002](#))

101 [Q 3](#) (Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts)

Blackpool has received, but over a 10 year period rather than across a series of separate projects would be more impactful.¹⁰² The *Communities on the edge* report recommended the Government implement longer-term sustainable funding.¹⁰³ Alan noted that:

“Everything becomes short term. Effectively, everything is almost capital. Even your revenue projects are almost capital, because they are one and a half or two years, so it is something you know you are going to be able to do for a short period.”¹⁰⁴

80. As demonstrated by the concerns set out above, we agree with Blackpool Council’s assessment that it is:
- “ ... difficult to argue that the government has developed a funding and support system tailored to the needs of seaside communities, from which all places have been able to benefit in proportion to their need.”¹⁰⁵
81. Will Garton, Director General for Levelling Up at DLUHC, noted the complex environment in which these funding streams are being implemented in light of the cost of living crisis and the recovery after the pandemic, but emphasised that DLUHC is “not waiting for the economic winds to change and be more positive; we are changing stuff on the ground now”.¹⁰⁶
82. The Levelling Up White Paper acknowledged that the complex funding environment has resulted in “a patchwork of fragmented funds, separate but often overlapping, each seeking to improve local place-based economic development”. The White Paper committed to “set out a plan for streamlining the funding landscape”.¹⁰⁷ In evidence to the Public Accounts Committee, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities explained that the Government was moving towards two significant funds: the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which is awarded by formula, and the Levelling Up Fund, which is awarded by competition.¹⁰⁸
83. The Minister acknowledged that the funding environment is “complex” and involves overlap. She reiterated the Government’s commitment to producing a “funding simplification plan” but could not provide detail on when this will be released.¹⁰⁹
84. The Minister also noted the funding opportunity posed by greater devolution and the work on the trailblazer deals to grant single financial settlements which would provide “longer-term certainty about what cash is coming in so that they can plan and put forth projects that perhaps cannot be completed in 12 months but over five years might be.”¹¹⁰ Tendring District Council and Essex County Council agreed with the opportunity posed by greater devolution, stating that it “will bring greater focus to place-based

102 [Q 5](#) (Alan Cavill)

103 [Communities on the edge](#), p 113

104 [Q 5](#) (Alan Cavill)

105 Written evidence from Blackpool Council ([RST0002](#))

106 [Q 23](#) (Will Garton)

107 [Levelling Up: Levelling Up the United Kingdom](#), p 128

108 House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, [Local economic growth](#) (Fifth Report, Session 2022–23, HC 252) p 9, Q 38

109 [Q 26](#) (Dehenna Davison MP)

110 [Q 26](#) (Dehenna Davison MP)

regeneration programmes and ensure a longer-term, more sustainable approach to outcome delivery where it is needed most.”¹¹¹

85. ***The Committee supports the Government’s decision to review the current funding landscape in light of the universal feedback regarding the cost and complexity involved in accessing the currently available funds. The decision to move to a more formula-based approach should ensure areas of greatest need, including seaside towns and communities, receive the funding they require. We recommend the Government consult on the current formula used to determine the areas of most need under the UKSPF to help inform any changes needed to the future formula-based funding stream. We urge the Government to publish its new funding plan as soon as possible.***
86. **Future funding streams should ensure that seaside towns and communities receive the additional support they need and recognition of the increased costs involved in supporting these communities.**
87. ***Seaside towns and communities face a combination of deeply entrenched issues. To address these successfully, and make meaningful and sustained improvements, requires long-term consistent commitment, not a succession of short-term initiatives. The Government must find a way to provide the long-term funding that seaside towns and communities need to support effective regeneration and address systemic challenges.***
88. Tendring District Council and Essex County Council highlighted that the current funding streams are “small scale and short term compared to the vast majority of government funding to support local areas, which flows through mainstream public sector and welfare budgets.”¹¹²
89. Local government funding is one mechanism which could provide longer term and sustainable support to coastal areas. The *Communities on the edge* report recommended the Government review the local government funding formula in order to reflect both the needs of seaside towns and communities and the additional costs to tackle disparities.¹¹³ Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts reiterated this recommendation in her oral evidence to the Committee and set out:
- “Delivering the basics for your coastal community is much more than it could be for another community, so that has to be taken into account, as do levels of deprivation in those areas. For us at the moment, the funding formula is on the right lines, but there is quite a long way to go for it.”¹¹⁴
90. ***We recommend that the Government reviews the local government funding formula to assess its effectiveness in providing the level of support needed in coastal towns and communities.***
91. Tendring District Council and Essex County Council set out the difficulty in coastal areas securing public and private investment “due to the complex

111 Written evidence from Tendring District Council and Essex County Council ([RST0003](#))

112 Written evidence from Tendring District Council and Essex County Council ([RST0003](#))

113 *Communities on the edge*, p 113

114 [Q 3](#) (Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts)

nature of the challenges” in these areas which results “in public sector needing to play a central role in stimulating market activity.”¹¹⁵

92. South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership told us that the investments through the various funding streams “will not be sustainable without a package of incentives to encourage the private sector to respond to the exciting initiatives of the public sector which whilst fantastic for the local area form only one half of the development equation in a healthy economy.”¹¹⁶ The Councils Partnership called it an “ongoing challenge” to create a mechanism to work with the private sector.
93. It would be a missed opportunity not to maximise public investment as a result of a lack of private sector engagement.
94. ***The Government should ensure that effective work is carried out to ensure that the funding streams made available are marketed to encourage private sector industry investment to match or contribute. More needs to be done to ensure that public funding streams are used to lever private investment in coastal areas to enable regeneration to take place.***
95. The Spring Budget 2023 saw further regeneration and levelling up funding announced. The Chancellor announced a one-off investment of £211 million in 16 levelling up regeneration projects. The projects chosen were selected using metrics which cover skills, pay, productivity and health. The coastal areas, including Blackpool, Tendring, East Suffolk, Northumberland, North East Lincolnshire and Redcar and Cleveland, will receive £75 million. Three levelling up capital projects receiving £58 million were also announced with the seaside town of Bootle selected to regenerate its town centre.¹¹⁷ The Budget also introduced Levelling Up Partnerships.

Levelling Up Partnerships

96. The new Levelling Up Partnerships aim to provide “bespoke place-based regeneration” in areas deemed to be in the most need of levelling up.¹¹⁸ 20 areas in England will form these Partnerships, seven of which include coastal areas: Hastings, Redcar and Cleveland, Rother, South Tyneside, Tendring, Torbay and Torridge. Partnerships will receive funding of over £400 million and this will be allocated across the Partnerships on a case by case basis.
97. Prior to this announcement the Government carried out three ‘deep dive’ pilot partnerships in Blackpool, Blyth and Grimsby. Throughout this report we have referenced the positive outcomes that these partnerships, and the investment, have created. Impacts covered areas including transport, anti-social behaviour and housing. Alan Cavill told us:

“We had a department, in DLUHC, that had decided that its job was to try to make things come together for a location and that the whole

115 Written evidence from Tendring District Council and Essex County Council (RST0003)

116 Written evidence from South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (RST0001)

117 HM Treasury, *Spring Budget 2023*, HC 1183 (15 March 2023) p 71–2: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1144441/Web_accessible_Budget_2023.pdf [accessed 12 May 2023] and Supplementary written evidence from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (RST0007)

118 HM Treasury, *Spring Budget 2023*, HC 1183 (15 March 2023) p 71: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1144441/Web_accessible_Budget_2023.pdf [accessed 12 May 2023]

of government should be pulling in the same direction. It is not about money, although money is great. It is not just about money at all. It is about recognising the needs of a place, or a set of places in the case of seaside towns, and owning them altogether between us, rather than individually.”¹¹⁹

98. The Chief Executive of North East Lincolnshire Council, Rob Walsh, has said of the Grimsby ‘deep dive’ that it has taken the Council’s relationship with Government to “a more mutually informed and productive level” and set out that:

“For the best part of a week officials from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, the then Department for Business, Energy, & Industrial Strategy, the Department for Environment, Rural Affairs & Food, Homes England and the Cabinet Office spent time in our borough talking and listening to the council, our partners and a range of community leaders and stakeholders.”

He explained that their relationship with DLUHC is a “conduit into wider government” and recommended that the areas selected for a Levelling Up Partnerships should “embrace the process, be open to the experience and build from it.”¹²⁰

99. Will Garton noted that it is “much more focused, much more targeted and much more of a partnership with local government.”¹²¹
100. The Minister and officials explained the “bespoke” nature of the partnerships tailored to each local area.¹²² John McManus, Deputy Director of the Regeneration Delivery Unit at DLUHC, told the Committee that:

“it was not about Whitehall turning up and saying, “This is how we do business” but rather understanding what was already working well locally and then trying to amplify that and provide national government support.”¹²³

101. The Minister cautioned that:

“we have to be realistic for now about the number of places in which we carry out these levelling-up partnerships. We want to make sure that they are true deep dives and can get into the nitty-gritty of detail. If we were to, let us say, double the number but without the appropriate resource, our fear is that we would not be able to go into as much depth as we might like to tackle some of those changes. That is not to say that the programme may not continue following those initial 20; it is just that we want to make sure there is that right level of detail and dedication to those areas.”¹²⁴

102. As noted by the Minister and officials, Levelling Up Partnerships cannot be rolled out everywhere immediately. It is imperative to learn from early

119 Q 3 (Alan Cavill)

120 LGC Plus, ‘Rob Walsh: Levelling up Grimsby—the ‘deep dive’ experience’: <https://www.lgcplus.com/politics/devolution-and-economic-growth/rob-walsh-levelling-up-grimsby-the-deep-dive-experience-21-03-2023/> [accessed 28 June 2023]

121 Q 23 (Will Garton)

122 Q 23 (Will Garton)

123 Q 24 (John McManus)

124 Q 26 (Dehenna Davison MP)

partnerships and share the lessons. Will Garton noted that the work done on housing in Blackpool “undoubtedly informs advice to Ministers and officials on what we are doing in the private rented sector in terms of legislation. It is a good, practical example of spending time in a place, learning some lessons and designing legislation accordingly”.¹²⁵ Will Garton recognised “one of the most difficult things is how you then learn lessons from those place-based partnerships and apply them across the country.”¹²⁶

103. *The Committee welcomes the announcement of Levelling Up Partnerships and is encouraged by the Government’s approach of working closely with local areas to ensure tailored approaches to tackle key concerns for those areas. The Government should ensure there is an assessment of what worked in pilot areas and to learn from this for future Levelling Up Partnerships. The Government must also establish effective mechanisms to share experiences and best practice from Levelling Up Partnerships with other local authorities facing similar challenges, such as other seaside towns and communities. We understand Levelling Up Partnerships cannot take place in every location across the UK, but it is essential that lessons learned are shared in order to assist in bringing about effective change across the country. We recommend that the Government publish its mechanisms to share best practice before the end of the year so local authorities know how this will be accessed.*
104. *The Government must evaluate the effectiveness of these Partnerships to identify what works best and consider what schemes or approaches could best be used in future to assist more areas.*

Connectivity

Transport

105. The 2019 report concluded that transport connectivity is “holding back many coastal communities and hindering the realisation of their economic potential.”¹²⁷ The Committee recommended that:
- “the Department for Transport, informed by the advice of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, prioritises improvements to the coastal transport network when it takes decisions on planning and investment. This should be informed by a detailed review of the coastal transport network which includes an assessment of where the greatest socio-economic benefits can be realised through improvements to transport connectivity.”¹²⁸
106. The Government Response rejected the Committee’s recommendation and emphasised the Department for Transport’s (DfT) existing “rigorous and fair appraisal process” for transport infrastructure.¹²⁹

125 [Q 26](#) (Will Garton)

126 [Q 26](#) (Will Garton)

127 [The future of seaside towns](#), para 123

128 [The future of seaside towns](#), para 124

129 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, *Government response to the Report of Session 2017–19 of House of Lords’ Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities Select Committee on The Future of Seaside Towns*, CP 102 (5 June 2019): https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/lords-committees/Regenerating-Seaside-Towns/Government_response.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

107. The Levelling Up White Paper recognised the substantial difference in transport connectivity across the UK and established a mission that:

“By 2030, local public transport connectivity across the country will be significantly closer to the standards of London, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing.”¹³⁰

108. At the time of the White Paper’s publication, the DfT replaced the previous guidance for strategic transport spending with the Levelling Up Toolkit. The Toolkit was developed to ensure business cases reflect the levelling up agenda and the DfT’s strategic priority to ‘Grow and Level Up the Economy’. It also sets out the need to consider how cases “will work alongside other funding streams or bids that are either in place or are being sought to level up the area.”¹³¹ We discuss the complexity of the funding schemes available at paragraphs 49 to 104.

109. A 2020 National Audit Office report found that:

“reliable, affordable bus services contribute to achieving the policy objectives of two thirds of government departments, from reducing health inequalities to access to justice”.¹³²

110. However recent Department for Transport data suggests that between 2016–17 and 2021–22 the local bus network reduced by 14%.¹³³ Further to this, analysis of Traffic Commissioners data in January 2023 found almost one in 10 local bus services were lost in the year between January 2022 and January 2023.¹³⁴

111. The Committee recognises the national challenge presented by the fact that bus journeys are yet to recover to pre-pandemic levels. The latest DfT figures show that, excluding London, weekday bus usage has been between 79% to 95% of the pre-COVID baseline.¹³⁵ As services are not being used to the same levels, they will be lost as they become commercially unviable. However, it remains the case that if the services local communities and commuters need are not run then bus user numbers will not increase.

112. In March 2021, the Government published its national bus strategy for England, *Bus Back Better*, which aims to increase bus journeys by bringing the standard of bus services across England closer to that of London. *Bus Back Better* sets out a number of goals to achieve this including:

- An increased role for local transport authorities in planning local bus services;

130 *Levelling Up: Levelling Up the United Kingdom*, p 176

131 Department for Transport, *Transport Business Cases: The Levelling Up Toolkit* (February 2022): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1054072/transport-business-cases-levelling-up-toolkit.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

132 National Audit Office, ‘Improving local bus services in England outside London’: <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/improving-bus-services-in-england/> [accessed 28 June 2023]

133 ‘Bus cuts: How are city’s bus service was quietly cut in half’, *BBC News* (20 February 2023): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-64651414>

134 ‘Almost one in 10 local bus services axed over last year in Great Britain’, *The Guardian* (24 January 2023): <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/jan/24/almost-one-10-local-bus-services-axed-last-year-great-britain>

135 Department for Transport, ‘Domestic Transport Usage by Mode’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-use-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/domestic-transport-usage-by-mode> [accessed 28 June 2023]

- Introducing local Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) to be drawn up by local transport authorities and bus operators to set out what actions will be taken to ensure the aims of *Bus Back Better* will be met;
- Guidance on the provision of socially and economically necessary services, known as supported services, such as journeys to access public services and employment;
- Proposed reform to the Bus Service Operators Grant.

The Strategy does not reference coastal areas or prioritise their connectivity.¹³⁶

113. All 79 local transport authorities submitted BSIPs as requested by the Government, but only 34 counties, city regions and unitary authorities initially received a share of central government funding of over £1 billion to deliver these plans.¹³⁷ This begged the question how the remaining BSIPs would proceed and whether any improvement would be seen in these areas. The Campaign for Better Transport said that “improving buses in a minority of places does not live up to the promise of a national bus strategy”.¹³⁸ The Government recently announced a further £160 million in funding “focused on communities that did not previously benefit from BSIP allocations.”¹³⁹ The guidance on supported services and any consultation on the Bus Service Operators Grant are yet to be published.
114. The pandemic saw the introduction of the COVID-19 Bus Service Support Grant which ran from April 2020 to August 2021, and was succeeded by the Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) in September 2021. The BRG has been extended a number of times, with the latest extension to 30 June 2023 with £80 million of funding available to bus operators to claim.¹⁴⁰ The LGA welcomed the Grant extension but set out that a “long-term, reformed bus funding model” is needed with “significant new money”.¹⁴¹ In May 2023 the Government committed a further £300million to councils and operators until 2025 to keep routes in place to enable essential travel and invest in infrastructure.¹⁴²
115. The Levelling Up White Paper also announced a pilot project in Cornwall to reduce the cost of transport by establishing a Superbus network. The pilot

136 Department for Transport, *Bus Back Better* (2021): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980227/DfT-Bus-Back-Better-national-bus-strategy-for-England.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

137 Department for Transport, Prime Minister’s Office, 10 Downing Street, The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP and The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, ‘Government extends £2 bus fare cap and protects vital services’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-extends-2-bus-fare-cap-and-protects-vital-services> [accessed 17 July 2023] and Written evidence from the Department for Transport (BUS0061)

138 Campaign for Better Transport, ‘Bus funding will only help a ‘minority of places’’: <https://bettertransport.org.uk/media/04-April-2022-Bus-funding-will-only-help-a-minority-of-places/> [accessed 28 June 2023]

139 HL Debate, 17 May 2023, cols 357-360 and Department for Transport, ‘Transparency data Bus service improvement plans: local transport authority final allocations’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-service-improvement-plans-local-transport-authority-allocations/bus-service-improvement-plans-local-transport-authority-final-allocations> [accessed 23 June 2023]

140 Department for Transport, The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP and The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, ‘£2 bus fare cap to be extended and bus services protected with new funding’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2-bus-fare-cap-to-be-extended-and-bus-services-protected-with-new-funding> [accessed 28 June 2023]

141 ‘Bus cuts: How a city’s bus service was quietly cut in half’ *BBC News* (20 February 2023): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-64651414>

142 This includes the £160 million for Bus Service Improvement Plans, known as Bus Service Improvement Plan plus and £140 million for a Bus Service Operators Grant plus mechanism.

was considered a “success” and an iteration of the project has been rolled out to areas across the UK with £2 per journey bus fare cap in place from January to March 2023.¹⁴³ This cap has been extended twice, most recently until the end of October 2023.¹⁴⁴ There will be a subsequent cap of £2.50 until November 2024 when prices will be reviewed again.

116. The rail network has also been subject to proposed reform. In May 2021 the Great British Railways: The Williams-Schapps Plan for Rail White paper was published setting out the “biggest change to the railways in 25 years”.¹⁴⁵ The Paper includes plans to introduce a new public body, Great British Railways, to own the infrastructure and run and plan the network, implement a Transport for London style contract structure for private companies to compete for and introduce new passenger service contracts to increase reliability. It was anticipated legislation would be brought forward in the form of a transport bill and a consultation was carried out to receive the necessary feedback on the proposals. It has since been announced that a bill will not be brought forward in this session due to a lack of parliamentary time, but will be introduced “as soon as possible”.¹⁴⁶
117. In recovery from the pandemic, similar to the challenges faced by bus services, the DfT transport figures show recent rail passenger journeys were 83% of those carried out in the equivalent week in 2019, pre-pandemic.¹⁴⁷
118. In January 2020, the Government established the Restoring your Railway programme to reinstate the railway lines and stations lost as a result of the 1963 Beeching Report.¹⁴⁸ The Government committed £500 million and invited MPs to work with local authorities and community groups to submit proposals to three fund categories. An update was provided in June 2022 on the successful proposals:
 - Ideas Fund (to assist in exploring the options for the restoration of old lines and stations)—23 schemes are developing a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC). This includes coastal areas of Mablethorpe, Blackpool South and the island of Anglesey.
 - Advanced Proposals (for lines and stations which had already been considered for restoration)—13 schemes have already developed an SOBC and are now continuing to be supported to progress further. Coastal projects include Portishead, passenger services between Totton

143 Cornwall Council, “Transport Minister visits Cornwall to hear about bus improvements and project offering free bus travel for care leavers”: <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/council-news/transport-streets-and-waste/transport-minister-visits-cornwall-to-hear-about-bus-improvements-and-project-offering-free-bus-travel-for-care-leavers/> [accessed 28 June 2023] and Department for Transport, ‘£2 bus fare cap’: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/2-bus-fare-cap#new-bus-fare-cap-from-1-january-2023> [accessed 28 June 2023]

144 Department for Transport, Prime Minister’s Office, 10 Downing Street, The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP and The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, ‘Government extends £2 bus fare cap and protects vital services’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-extends-2-bus-fare-cap-and-protects-vital-services> [accessed 28 June 2023]

145 Department for Transport and Williams Rail Review, *Great British Railways: The Williams-Schapps Plan for Rail* (May 2021): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/994603/gbr-williams-shapps-plan-for-rail.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

146 HC Deb, 24 October 2022, [cols 24–33](#)

147 Department for Transport, ‘Domestic Transport Usage by Mode’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-use-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/domestic-transport-usage-by-mode> [accessed 28 June 2023]

148 Railways Archive, ‘*The Reshaping of British Railways—Part 1: Report*’: <https://www.railwaysarchive.co.uk/docsummary.php?docID=13> [accessed 28 June 2023]

and Hythe, the Fleetwood Railway line and the Mid Cornwall Metro establishing a direct service between Newquay, St Austell, Truro and Falmouth.

- The New Stations Fund (for the restoration of old sites and new stations)—eight stations across England and Wales have currently been selected, including the Northumberland Line and Thanet Parkway Station on the coast.¹⁴⁹
119. The Government faced criticism regarding how far the available funds would be able to achieve the goals of the programme.¹⁵⁰ The Campaign for Better Transport, who had long called for lines to be reopened, supported the funding, but called for “more government funding in the future”.¹⁵¹ The Minister for Rail at the Department for Transport, Huw Merriman MP, gave evidence to the Transport Committee in January 2023 and cautioned the need to manage expectations as it is a “challenge to fit them all in” with the total funds available.¹⁵²
120. In his June 2021 letter to the Committee, Luke Hall MP, the then Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government at MHCLG, noted that other funding streams through Levelling Up funding would be available for infrastructure projects such as upgrading public transport. In January 2023 the Government announced that over £645 million from the Levelling Up Fund has been awarded to 26 projects across the UK to improve transport links.¹⁵³ However, not all projects will receive funding through this route. Essex County Council shared that their recent bid to the Levelling Up Fund in order to upgrade bus facilities in Clacton and Harwich, and introduce a new Demand Responsive Transport System in Tendring was unsuccessful.¹⁵⁴
121. The Minister recognised the importance of transport and told the Committee that transport:
- “is one of those areas that do not tend to be at the top of one’s mind when one thinks about levelling up. One thinks about health, education, jobs, et cetera, but if you cannot access those jobs or health appointments or you cannot visit your loved ones and what have you, levelling up is always doomed to fail. Naturally, we need to make sure that transport is at the forefront there.”¹⁵⁵

She said that “there is further to go, but good progress is certainly being made”.¹⁵⁶

149 Department for Transport, *Restoring Your Railway Fund Programme Update* (June 2022): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1092282/restoring-your-railway-programme-update.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

150 Andy McDonald, (@AndyMacDonaldMP), tweet on 28 January 2020: <https://twitter.com/AndyMcDonaldMP/status/1222115823285886977>

151 Campaign for Better Transport, ‘£5000m for reopening rail lines a ‘great start’’: <https://bettertransport.org.uk/media/28-january-2020-reopening-fund-a-great-start/> [accessed 12 May 2023]

152 Oral evidence taken before the Transport Committee, inquiry on Rail services and infrastructure, 18 January 2023 (Session 2022–23), Q 36, Q 96 (Huw Merriman MP)

153 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Northern Ireland Office, Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland, Office of the Secretary of State for Wales, The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, ‘Landmark Levelling Up Fund to spark transformational change across the UK’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/landmark-levelling-up-fund-to-spark-transformational-change-across-the-uk> [accessed 28 June 2023]

154 Written evidence from Tendring District Council and Essex County Council (RST0003)

155 Q 31 (Dehenna Davison MP)

156 Q 31 (Dehenna Davison MP)

122. The Minister and officials outlined the positive outcomes of the pilot Levelling Up Partnership in Grimsby in order to tackle transport concerns. Grimsby local authorities were concerned about the state of repair of the three bridges connecting the port to the town centre and as a result through the partnership funding the bridges were restored. The Minister expressed that the “levelling-up partnerships are crucial for addressing” transport concerns.¹⁵⁷ Will Garton set out that when working in these partnerships “where places tell us [transport] is the number one thing” they will do what they can to “bring about improvements”.¹⁵⁸ Will Garton noted that without this partnership working he did “not know whether that would ever have reached the top of the Department for Transport’s list, but perhaps not.”¹⁵⁹
123. The Minister also referenced the potential posed by the two trailblazer deeper devolution deals currently agreed with Greater Manchester and the West Midlands Combined Authority. The trailblazer deals were first set out in the Government’s Levelling Up White Paper to enable these authorities greater autonomy over a range of areas including transport.¹⁶⁰ The Minister emphasised that these deals provide a “blueprint to future transport devolution”.¹⁶¹
124. Despite these developments and new initiatives, Councils and local authorities fed back that the necessary progress in transport in coastal areas has not yet been seen.¹⁶² Alan Cavill explained that “most of the money is focused on the metropolitan areas when it comes to transport.”¹⁶³ The South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership echoed this with concerns that: “Major road or rail infrastructure investment on the scale needed to connect our coastal communities appears to be too expensive to justify in terms of DfT economic models.”¹⁶⁴ In a recent House of Lords debate, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at DfT, Baroness Vere of Norbiton, told the House that BSIPs are “putting the user first and increasing frequencies to provide the sort of services needed”... “particularly in bigger cities” with the suggestion that for more rural areas other interventions such as demand responsive transport could be implemented.¹⁶⁵ This suggests a differing approach to the needs of cities to that of harder to reach areas and queries how the national bus strategy will be truly effective in coastal areas.
125. A lack of sufficient and accessible public transport has a dramatic impact on coastal areas in terms of accessing jobs, education and local services. The *Communities on the edge* report found that coastal areas had longer commute times to reach the nearest large employment centre.¹⁶⁶ Tendring District Council and Essex County Council noted that “it is widely documented that there is insufficient investment in the transport connectivity and services necessary to support regeneration and growth in coastal areas.”¹⁶⁷

157 [Q 31](#) (Dehenna Davison MP)

158 [Q 31](#) (Will Garton)

159 [Q 23](#) (Will Garton)

160 [Levelling Up: Levelling Up the United Kingdom](#), p 235

161 [Q 31](#) (Dehenna Davison MP)

162 [Q 8](#) (Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts)

163 [Q 8](#) (Alan Cavill)

164 Written evidence from South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership ([RST0001](#))

165 HL Deb, 17 April 2023, [cols 147GC–176GC](#)

166 [Communities on the edge](#), p 29

167 Written evidence from Tendring District Council and Essex County Council ([RST0003](#))

126. Tendring District Council and Essex County Council called for “decisions on mainstream transport investment targeting coastal communities so it is quicker and cheaper to connect to the coast, for both education and work.”¹⁶⁸ The South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership similarly called for a “major re-think” about the transport challenges faced in order to tackle the “deep seated” issues.¹⁶⁹
127. *Poor transport connectivity continues to blight seaside towns and communities, and sufficient progress has not been made to address this. The Committee recognises the efforts made in subsidies and funding streams. However the Government needs to go further to tackle systemic connectivity issues. The fundamental problem has not changed since 2019, and the Committee reiterates the 2019 recommendation that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities should work with the Department for Transport to ensure that areas of most need are properly prioritised for planning and investment. The current approach is clearly not effective, and innovative solutions are needed to provide transport networks that work for coastal areas.*
128. *The Committee is disappointed in the progress that has been made to rectify the rail network losses resulting from the Beeching Report. More needs to be done to ensure that investment can continue in this area to protect those communities at the end of the line and build sustainable and effective connectivity.*

Digital connectivity

129. The 2019 report concluded that “improved digital connectivity presents a significant opportunity to overcome the challenges of peripherality in coastal areas, and would help existing businesses, encourage new business, and enable people to work more flexibly from home without the need to commute.”¹⁷⁰
130. The Committee recommended that:
- “the Government should promote initiatives to support digital connectivity in coastal communities specifically, and undertake a full programme of engagement with local authorities, LEPs and businesses in remote coastal communities to help to understand better the challenges to improved digital connectivity in coastal areas. The provision of high-quality broadband and mobile connectivity in coastal locations should be considered a priority, and an effective infrastructure investment in areas where the physical transport infrastructure is limited.”¹⁷¹

The Government Response confirmed “this is a high priority” but did not commit to a more dedicated approach to coastal areas.¹⁷²

168 Written evidence from Tendring District Council and Essex County Council (RST0003)

169 Written evidence from South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (RST0001)

170 *The future of seaside towns*, para 129

171 *The future of seaside towns*, para 130

172 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, *Government response to the Report of Session 2017–19 of House of Lords’ Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities Select Committee on The Future of Seaside Towns*, CP 102 (5 June 2019): https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/lords-committees/Regenerating-Seaside-Towns/Government_response.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

131. In March 2021 the Government launched Project Gigabit setting out plans to deliver gigabit-capable networks in hard to reach areas with £5 billion of investment.¹⁷³ The Government's target was to reach a minimum of 85% gigabit-capable broadband coverage by 2025 and to get as close to 100% as possible with nationwide coverage by 2030. DLUHC noted that gigabit broadband contracts have gone live in Cornwall, Cumbria and Dorset, with procurement live in Norfolk, Suffolk and Kent.¹⁷⁴ Project Gigabit also supports the UK Gigabit Voucher Scheme, where residents and small and medium sized businesses can apply for vouchers towards the costs of setting up a new gigabit-capable connection if they are not included in roll-out plans.¹⁷⁵
132. In 2020 the Government established the Universal Service Obligation (USO) in order to provide broadband to areas that do not have access to a decent and affordable connection. There is a set criteria for residents and businesses to meet to be eligible for the USO.¹⁷⁶ The current estimates suggest that 80,000 premises do not have access to decent broadband, down from 1.1 million premises in 2017. Ofcom anticipates in the next 12 months around 15,000 of these premises will be covered by publicly funded broadband roll-out schemes.¹⁷⁷
133. In terms of 4G coverage the Government has worked with the four mobile network operators in the UK to establish the Shared Rural Network with a target of providing 4G coverage to 95% of the UK.¹⁷⁸
134. One of the Government's 12 Levelling Up missions is a target that:
- “By 2030, the UK will have nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population.”¹⁷⁹
- The White Paper also establishes the Government's ambition for the majority of the population to have access to 5G signal by 2027.¹⁸⁰
135. The Government published its UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy in April 2023 setting out a revised ambition “to deliver nationwide coverage of standalone 5G to all populated areas by 2030” and a variety of mechanisms to introduce this.¹⁸¹ The Strategy also looks ahead to the future of 6G networks. No reference is made to coastal areas. The Strategy noted the challenge that 5G roll-out is likely to focus on urban areas in the near term as a result of the

173 Building Digital UK, ‘Project Gigabit’: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/project-gigabit-uk-gigabit-programme> [accessed 28 June 2023]

174 Supplementary written evidence from Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (RST0007)

175 The Rural gigabit voucher scheme closed in March 2021 and the Gigabit broadband voucher scheme ended in May 2020.

176 House of Commons Library, The Universal Service Obligation (USO) for Broadband, CBP 8146 (7 March 2022): <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8146/CBP-8146.pdf> [accessed 28 June 2023]

177 Ofcom, *Connected Nations 2022 UK Report* (15 December 2022): https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0034/249289/connected-nations-uk-report.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

178 Shared Rural Network, ‘Home’: <https://srn.org.uk/> [accessed 28 June 2023]

179 *Levelling Up: Levelling Up the United Kingdom*, p 183

180 Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, ‘Wireless Infrastructure Strategy: call for evidence’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/wireless-infrastructure-strategy-call-for-evidence> [accessed 18 June 2023]

181 Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, ‘UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-wireless-infrastructure-strategy/uk-wireless-infrastructure-strategy> [accessed 28 June 2023]

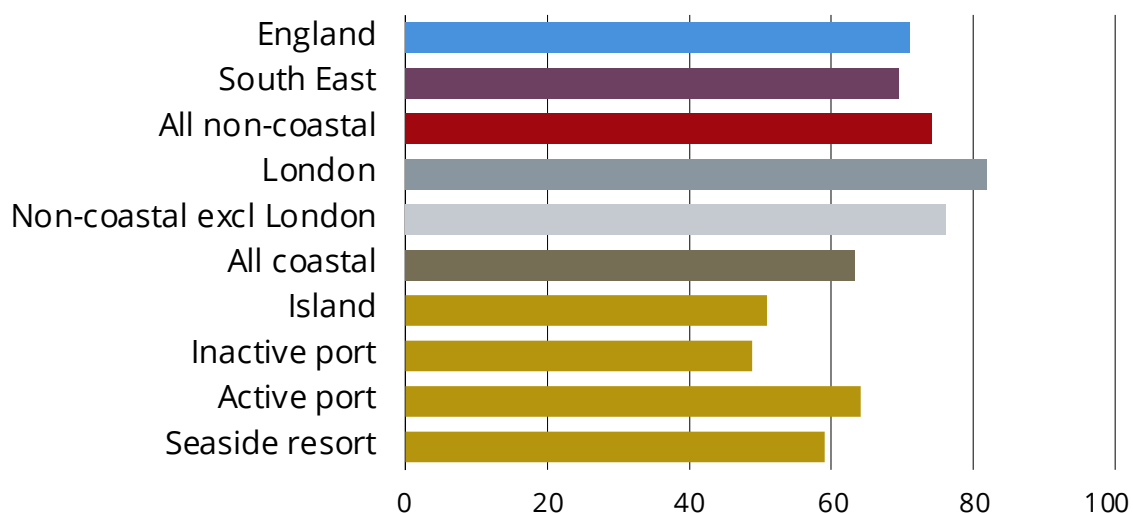
commercial returns. Alan Cavill also made this assessment highlighting that the commercial approach taken to deliver 4G and 5G across the country, with more minimal government funding, means that places with greater population density would be prioritised.¹⁸²

136. The Ofcom *Connected Nations 2022 UK Report* sets out the current position regarding connectivity across the UK:

- 42% of premises now have access to full-fibre broadband;
- 70% of premises have access to gigabit-capable broadband;
- Superfast broadband, with speeds of a minimum of 30 megabits per second, is available to 97% of UK homes;
- 5G coverage outside of premises provided by at least one mobile network operator has now reached 67–77%;
- 4G coverage has seen a smaller improvement with an improvement from 79–86% in 2021 to 80–87% in 2022.¹⁸³

137. The recent *Communities on the edge* report published in January 2023 found that coastal communities have fewer premises that have gigabit-capable broadband than non-coastal areas and England as a whole. The graph below sets out the difference between coastal and non-coastal areas.¹⁸⁴

Figure 1: Percentage of premises with gigabit capable broadband, England, local authority districts 2022 per cent



Source: *Communities on the edge*, p 30

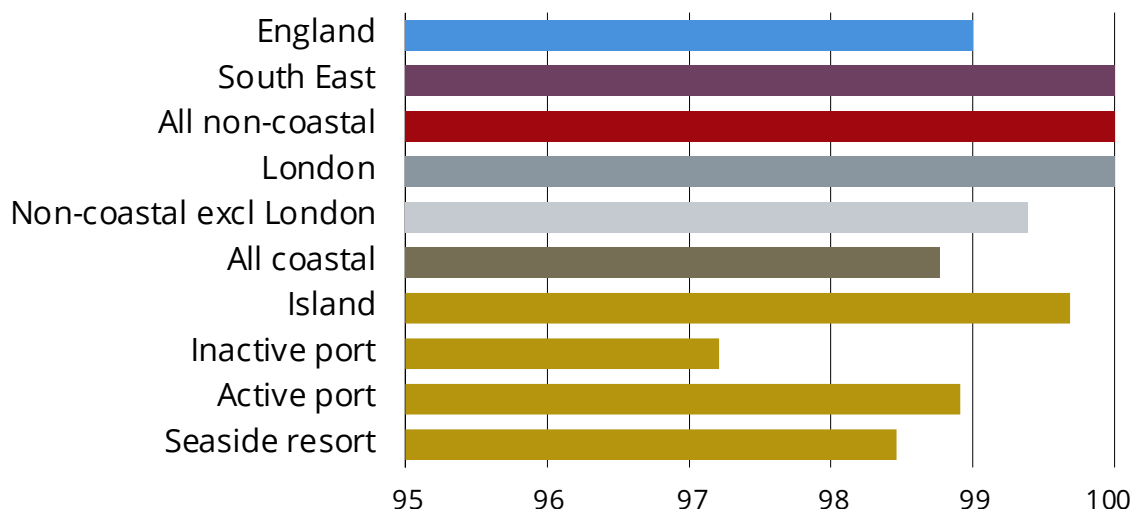
138. A similar disparity can be seen in the 4G coverage experienced by coastal and non-coastal areas.

182 Q 8 (Alan Cavill)

183 Ofcom, *Connected Nations 2022 UK Report* (15 December 2022): https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0034/249289/connected-nations-uk-report.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

184 *Communities on the edge*, p 30

Figure 2: Percentage of 4G coverage by at least one mobile network provider, England, local authority districts, 2022 per cent



Source: *Communities on the edge*, p 30

139. The benefits for improved digital connectivity are clear. As highlighted by Alan Cavill:

“Digital could be the answer for seaside locations, because it gives them the opportunity to be in business and to engage without necessarily having to build a £100 million motorway to wherever they are.”¹⁸⁵

140. The South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership explained “only a national programme of world class digital development will address the deficit we face by providing 5G infrastructure to make our private sector investment ready.”¹⁸⁶
141. Tendring District Council and Essex County Council reported a good base level of digital coverage with 99% receiving 30 megabits per second, but noted that the future gigabit roll out, there is currently only 29% coverage, with this likely to increase to 92% in Clacton and Jaywick by 2025.
142. Tendring District Council and Essex County Council also raised the key issue of affordability of digital connectivity which is causing digital exclusion in Essex particularly in coastal and rural areas.¹⁸⁷
143. Blackpool Council explained a more mixed picture that “some pockets in the town remain digitally excluded” due to lower internet connection speeds, whereas more generally the town has received both public and private sector investment in digital connectivity and the areas prime location of transatlantic fibre connectivity “is starting to attract interest and potential future investments.”¹⁸⁸

185 Q 8 (Alan Cavill)

186 Written evidence from South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (RST0001)

187 Written evidence from Tendring District Council and Essex County Council (RST0003)

188 Written evidence from Blackpool Council (RST0002)

144. DLUHC noted that “hard to reach and remote coastal regions are in need of next generation gigabit-capable broadband to avoid being left behind.”¹⁸⁹ The Minister explained “good progress is being made on the gigabit broadband rollout” and it is “very much on track in government”.¹⁹⁰ Similarly, “pretty good progress thus far on the 4G coverage.”¹⁹¹ Although this may be the case generally, the data found in the *Communities on the edge* report suggests that this is not reflected in coastal areas. Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts went further to explain that some coastal areas do not have a phone signal and as a result the metrics focusing on broadband and 4G does not give the full picture of connectivity.¹⁹²
145. ***Progress has been made but digital connectivity remains a challenge in coastal areas. The Committee reiterates the need to prioritise digital connectivity in coastal areas, particularly in light of the lack of progress with transport options. Improved digital connectivity will enable coastal areas to capitalise upon the changed ways of working and the opportunities this presents for greater access to education and employment.***

Education and skills: stimulating an entrepreneurial culture

Education in coastal areas

146. In 2019 the Committee shared the concerns of witnesses regarding the future of the Opportunity Area Programme, and recommended the Government set out its evaluation plans for the programme and clarify how the programme would proceed, particularly in relation to seaside towns.¹⁹³
147. Opportunity Areas (OAs) were established to improve social mobility through education. 12 OAs were established, with OAs in coastal towns and communities including Blackpool, Hastings, the North Yorkshire Coast and West Somerset. OAs were initially a three year programme but were subsequently extended to five years, ending in September 2022. OAs targeted a range of education concerns and insight guides were produced to share best practice from the initiatives used in these areas.¹⁹⁴ The OA evaluation programme found “strategic stakeholders across OAs believed that progress had been made towards achieving particular priorities set out in the OA delivery plan.” Stakeholders felt that English, maths and science attainment had improved alongside reduced rates of exclusion, increased attendance and increased rates of staff recruitment and retention. However, stakeholders also perceived post-16 outcomes were less successful.¹⁹⁵
148. Russell Hobby, CEO of Teach First, told us the OAs programme was a “very mixed picture. Some of them were strong and others were not.”¹⁹⁶ Blackpool Council explained from their view the OAs programme was “beginning to

189 Supplementary written evidence from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities ([RST0007](#))

190 [Q 23](#) (Dehenna Davison MP)

191 [Q 32](#) (Dehenna Davison MP)

192 [Q 8](#) (Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts)

193 *The future of seaside towns*, para 142

194 Department for Education, ‘Opportunity areas insight guides’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/opportunity-areas-insight-guides> [accessed 28 June 2023]

195 Department for Education, *Opportunity Areas Process Evaluation Research Report* (May 2022): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1078546/Opportunity_Areas_Process_Evaluation_Research_Report.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

196 [Q 12](#) (Russell Hobby)

address some of the inequalities related to literacy, inclusion and the numbers of young people who are not in employment, education and / or training.”¹⁹⁷

149. Sarah Bone, Member of the Association of School and College Leaders Council and Head Teacher of the Headlands School in Bridlington, explained her concerns that under the OAs programme “the money has not been distributed fairly” with areas deemed not to have a high enough need missing out on inclusion in the programme. She explained that there are:

“exactly the same challenges around socioeconomic deprivation in Bridlington that are experienced in Scarborough and Filey, but I did not have the resources to continue funding some of those strategies and policies we had put in place.”¹⁹⁸

150. The Levelling Up White Paper introduced a mission that:

“By 2030, the number of primary school children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths will have significantly increased. In England, this will mean 90% of children will achieve the expected standard, and the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in the worst performing areas will have increased by over a third.”

The Government’s Education White Paper, *Opportunity for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child*, added a further target to increase the average national GCSE grade in English and Maths from 4.5 to 5 by 2030.¹⁹⁹

151. The challenge faced in coastal areas meeting these targets is substantial given the current attainment gaps. The Chief Medical Officer’s annual report in 2021 found that children in coastal communities have worse education attainment compared to children in non-coastal areas. The report noted a further disparity in attainment between different types of coastal communities, in that smaller seaside towns were found to have the lowest percentage of pupils reaching the reading, writing and maths expected standards.²⁰⁰ In the recent *Communities on the edge* report researchers found that, in the 2021/22 academic year, attainment 8 scores (the metric monitored for pupils at the end of key stage four) of 14–16 year olds is an average of 47 points in coastal areas, compared to 49 points in non-coastal areas. The report also showed the percentage of people achieving GCSEs or equivalent in English and Maths by 19 years old is less in coastal areas than non-coastal areas.²⁰¹
152. The report found that coastal school students are more likely to be persistently absent from school. Tendring District Council and Essex County Council’s evidence supported this explaining that even post-pandemic “attendance

197 Written evidence from Blackpool Council ([RST0002](#))

198 [Q 12](#) (Sarah Bone)

199 Department for Education, *Opportunity for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child* (March 2022): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1063601/Opportunity_for_all_strong_schools_with_great_teachers_for_your_child_web_accessible.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

200 Chief Medical Officer, *Chief Medical Officer’s Annual Report 2021 Health in Coastal Communities* (July 2021): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005216/cmo-annual_report-2021-health-in-coastal-communities-accessible.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

201 *Communities on the edge*, p 31

remain a concern for some pupils, and the negative attainment impacts that follows from poorer attendance.”²⁰²

153. Russell Hobby noted that in some coastal communities “the levels of deprivation tend to be higher than the norm across the country, which means the attainment gaps and destination gaps we see in other places are likewise accentuated.”²⁰³ Sarah Bone commented that “we have inner-city problems in the coastal region, but without the resources cities may well be afforded.”²⁰⁴
154. As identified in the purpose of the OAs programme, education continues to be a key driver of social mobility.²⁰⁵ The Social Mobility Commission’s report, *The long shadow of deprivation: Differences in opportunities across England*, welcomed OAs and felt they made a “helpful contribution and started to shift the dial in places where geographical disadvantage is entrenched.”²⁰⁶ The Social Mobility Commission’s 2017 State of the Nation report found social mobility cold spots found to be concentrated in rural or coastal areas.²⁰⁷ The Commission’s report in 2020 evaluating progress in tackling social mobility concerns, concluded that the government’s “narrative of inclusive growth and levelling up has not so far been matched by a consistent or coherent effort to improve social mobility through economic policies or devolution.”²⁰⁸ A recent Talent Tap and The Aldridge Foundation study found young people from rural and coastal areas are at risk of being trapped in ‘social mobility cold spots’.²⁰⁹
155. The Levelling Up White Paper introduced Education Investment Areas to replace OAs.²¹⁰ 55 Education Investment Areas (EIAs) have been established to fund and support the local authority areas where educational attainment is weakest. Within the 55 EIAs, the Government has introduced 24 Priority EIAs (PEIAs) which “aim to transform the life chances of children and young people in these areas of the country which have low social mobility”.²¹¹ The PEIAs include the 12 former OAs and PEIAs are in place in a total of six coastal areas including Hartlepool and Portsmouth. EIAs and PEIAs will be prioritised for other schemes such as trust capacity funding, the Connect

202 Written evidence from Tendring District Council and Essex County Council ([RST0003](#))

203 [Q 11](#) (Russell Hobby)

204 [Q 11](#) (Sarah Bone)

205 Social Mobility Commission, *State of the Nation 2022: A fresh approach to social mobility* (June 2022): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1084566/State_of_the_Nation_2022_A_fresh_approach_to_social_mobility.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]. The latest State of the Nation report does not include an assessment of cold spots or coastal areas.

206 Social Mobility Commission, *The long shadow of deprivation Differences in opportunities across England Research Report* (September 2020): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/923623/SMC_Long_shadow_of_deprivation_MAIN_REPORT_Accessible.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

207 Social Mobility Commission, *State of the Nation: Social Mobility in Great Britain* (November 2017) p 1: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/662744/State_of_the_Nation_2017_-_Social_Mobility_in_Great_Britain.pdf [accessed 17 July 2023]

208 The Social Mobility Commission, *Monitoring social mobility 2013–2020: Is the government delivering on our recommendations?* (June 2020) p 61: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/891155/Monitoring_report_2013-2020_-_Web_version.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

209 Aldridge Foundation, ‘The forgotten generation: city v countryside divide revealed’: <https://www.aldridgefoundation.com/news-item/the-forgotten-generation-city-v-countryside-divide-revealed/> [accessed 28 June 2023]

210 *Levelling Up: Levelling Up the United Kingdom*, p 189

211 Written evidence from the Department for Education ([RST0006](#))

the Classroom programme to upgrade wifi networks, the goal to open new 16–19 free schools to ensure children from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to a college, school sixth form or 16-19 academy, and the new primary careers programme and the Levelling Up Premium, discussed further below. Despite introducing the replacement EIA and PEIA system, Blackpool Council told us “the gap between the end of the OAP funding and the beginning of the PEIA funding has already led to a loss of momentum.”²¹²

156. SchoolDash research found that the local authority which a school is within is a “very poor” indicator of the support it needs. The research identified that over a third of primary schools in areas not selected as EIAs had lower Key Stage 2 attainment levels than the average of primary schools within EIAs.²¹³ The Association of School and College Leaders said EIAs were “positive” but acknowledged the differing levels of deprivation across the areas divided by the EIAs.²¹⁴
157. Geoff Barton, General Secretary of the ASCL, called EIAs a “rehash of existing ideas”.²¹⁵ Russell Hobby echoed this concern stating:
- “over the last 20 years or so we have had a fairly rapid change in the different vehicles we use to target local funding through education. We give them new names and we reinvent them. We have not stuck with anything long enough to determine whether it truly works.”²¹⁶
158. Blackpool Council stated that the funding available under the new schemes “is only a fraction of what is required to sustain and extend the work”. The Council was also critical of the impact of the gap between the funding from the OAs programme ceasing and the introduction of the PEIA funding, which resulted in a “loss of momentum.”²¹⁷
159. The Department for Education (DfE) will monitor how successful the EIAs and PEIAs are in achieving the objective of raising standards by assessing attainment in these areas on an annual basis. The Department will also assess the take up of the additional initiatives offered under the two schemes.²¹⁸
160. When questioned on how best practice from the schemes and activities in the EIAs and PEIAs would be shared, DfE did not commit to a more formalised lessons learned approach as seen in the OAs programme. The Department emphasised that the additional funding available to PEIAs will fund “activities with a strong evidence base that is proven to support improvement in attainment, not the creation of new practice.”²¹⁹ This suggests that, rather than the tailored designs referenced in the roll out of the EIA and PEIA schemes, more uniform approaches will be used to produce results.

212 Written evidence from Blackpool Council ([RST0002](#))

213 Tes magazine, ‘New investment areas ‘miss underperforming schools’: <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/new-investment-areas-miss-underperforming-schools> [accessed 18 May 2023]

214 Tes magazine, ‘New investment areas ‘miss underperforming schools’: <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/new-investment-areas-miss-underperforming-schools> [accessed 18 May 2023]

215 ASCL, ‘Levelling Up: Now we know what it means—lots of stuff but little substance’: <https://www.ascl.org.uk/News/Blog/February-2022/Levelling-up-now-we-know-what-it-means> [accessed 28 June 2023]

216 [Q 12](#) (Russell Hobby)

217 Written evidence from Blackpool Council ([RST0002](#))

218 Written evidence from Department for Education ([RST0006](#))

219 Written evidence from Department for Education ([RST0006](#))

161. **The need to provide additional support to areas struggling with educational attainment and social mobility is clear. However, it is concerning that the Government has introduced a further initiative to tackle these issues without clearly demonstrating how this will produce better outcomes than the Opportunity Areas programme.**
162. *The Committee recommends that the Government keep the Education Investment Areas and Priority Education Investment Areas selected under review to assess whether these are effectively targeting the areas of greatest need.*
163. *It is clear that different areas face different educational challenges, but where there is commonality, such as in coastal towns and communities, an emphasis should be placed on information sharing where interventions under the Education Investment Areas programme have been demonstrated to be effective. Areas which have not been included within the EIAs should also be able to benefit from the lessons learned. The Department for Education should ensure it provides collated examples of best practice and shares the progress made.*
164. *The Government must ensure there is no repeat of the ad hoc extensions to the Opportunity Areas programme. The educational challenges faced by coastal communities, and other areas, are long-term and therefore EIAs and PEIAs must be properly organised as multi-year investments in order to tackle these. Schools need certainty.*

Teacher recruitment and retention

165. The Committee recommended:
- “that the Government undertakes a bespoke review to examine what can be done, including consideration of a major marketing campaign, to attract teachers to seaside towns and communities and to incentivise healthy levels of retention.”²²⁰
166. In January 2019 the Government published a Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy.²²¹ The Strategy is not tailored to coastal areas, but the Government Response committed to work with schools, multi-academy trusts and local authorities to create local offers to attract teachers and tackle retention challenges.²²²
167. The Response also referenced the targeting of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) marketing that had been carried out in a number of areas including Hastings, Scarborough and Blackpool. However, by the time the Committee followed-up the special inquiry committee’s recommendation in 2021 the targeted

220 *The future of seaside towns*, para 156

221 Department for Education, ‘Teacher recruitment and retention strategy’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-recruitment-and-retention-strategy> [accessed 28 June 2023]

222 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, *Government response to the Report of Session 2017–19 of House of Lords’ Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities Select Committee on The Future of Seaside Towns*, CP 102 (5 June 2019): https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/lords-committees/Regenerating-Seaside-Towns/Government_response.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

ITT marketing was no longer taking place.²²³ As an alternative, a Marketing Toolkit was provided to support ITT providers. In written evidence DfE explained that the current teaching marketing campaign spans a number of channels and directs viewers to the Get Into Teaching service for further information. The DfE informed us that targeted marketing is carried out at around 50 chosen universities, which includes coastal universities in Bournemouth, Plymouth and Southampton. There are also marketing events held across the country including coastal areas.²²⁴ We welcome a renewed campaign but these activities do not target coastal locations sufficiently or encourage applying for a teaching post in these areas.

168. The Government has utilised a range of financial initiatives to promote teacher recruitment and retention. The Teachers' Student Loan Reimbursement (TSLR) pilot applied to language and science teachers in 26 local authorities chosen due to their high need for teachers. Coastal areas were identified as high need including Blackpool, North East Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire and Northumberland. The scheme applied to those teachers who completed their ITT from the 2013/14 to the 2020/21 academic years. An evaluation of the scheme in January 2023 found that, although teachers in the pilot areas had high awareness of the scheme, headteachers did not and therefore could not let teaching applicants know about this incentive. Further to this only 7% of trainee teachers said the scheme would strongly influence which subject they would choose to teach and analysis "did not find strong evidence of any effect of receiving TSLR on teacher retention." However, 33% of teachers surveyed said financial incentives did motivate them to continue being a teacher.²²⁵ It is not yet clear if the findings of the pilot evaluation will result in amendments to the pilot offer or a permanent end to the scheme.
169. Early Career Payments provided funds over the first five years of teaching for mathematics teachers.²²⁶ In high need local authorities teachers received a higher payment of £7,500 in the third and fifth years of teaching. Lower need areas received a £5,000 payment. Blackpool, the East Riding of Yorkshire and Northumberland were among the coastal areas identified as high need. The Early Career Payment pilot was expanded from the 2020/21 cohort to include physics, chemistry and language teachers. The payments received have also been adjusted for that cohort to £2,000 with an increase to £3,000 in a high need area. The pilot has not continued beyond the student teachers in the 2020/21 academic year. It does not appear an evaluation of this pilot has yet been carried out.
170. During teacher interviews on the TSLR scheme it was fed back that "bursaries exerted the strongest influence on recruitment into the profession".²²⁷ DfE

223 Letter from Luke Hall MP, the then Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government, to Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Chair of the Liaison Committee (16 June 2021): <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/6637/documents/71493/default/>

224 Written evidence from Department for Education ([RST0006](#))

225 Department for Education, *The Teacher Student Loan Reimbursement Scheme Final Evaluation Report* (January 2023): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1130879/Teacher_student_loan_reimbursement_scheme_final_evaluation_report.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

226 Department for Education, 'Early-career payments for teachers': <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-career-payments-guidance-for-teachers-and-schools> [accessed 17 July 2023]

227 Department for Education, *The Teacher Student Loan Reimbursement Scheme Final Evaluation Report* (January 2023): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1130879/Teacher_student_loan_reimbursement_scheme_final_evaluation_report.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

informed us that they have implemented bursaries with a value of £27,000 tax-free and scholarships worth £29,000 tax-free to incentivise teachers to work in key subject areas such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing.²²⁸

171. The Government subsequently introduced the Levelling Up Premium, which offers up to £3,000 tax-free annually for the first five years of chemistry, computing, mathematics and physics teachers' careers. It is available in areas where there is a high need for teachers, within those in EIAs able to claim up to the £3,000 amount and those outside an EIA able to claim up to £2,000. 69% of secondary or special schools in coastal areas, as defined by the Office for National Statistics Coastal Towns 2020 analysis, are eligible for the Levelling Up Premium. This is in comparison with 59% of remaining schools across the county.²²⁹
172. Russell Hobby set out that "the levelling-up premium has potential ... once you make a reasonably significant cash offer, it does incentivise behaviour."²³⁰ However, he suggested a higher figure of in the region £5,000 would be needed to overcome hurdles such as relocation.²³¹
173. Sarah Bone raised concerns about the premium reaching the areas that need it, noting that staff in her town would only be entitled to £1,500 of the levelling up premium. She explained:
- "That is not going to pay the petrol to come through from Hull or York for more than three months. Fifty per cent of my staff will travel from Hull for less of a salary. If they are in Hull, they are likely to be able to be paid more because of the academy structure that exists in Hull. The staff who are traveling to my school are technically going to be paid slightly less and they are paying more to travel."²³²
174. The Government also established 87 teaching school hubs to be centres of excellence in teaching and leadership training, providing support to teachers throughout their careers.²³³ 31 hubs provide support for 146 coastal areas across England. The hubs deliver the Strategy reforms of the Early Career Framework, establishing a 2-year professional development induction for early career teachers, the reformed ITT and accredited ITT providers, and updated National Professional Qualifications to enable teachers to undertake specialist training.
175. The High Potential Initial Teacher Training programme continues to be delivered by Teach First in order to bring teachers to the areas that have the greatest need. Coastal areas are included in the current programme in areas including Weymouth, Blackpool, Brighton, Portsmouth and Scarborough.
176. Our witnesses explained the continuing challenges faced in recruiting and retaining teachers in coastal areas, but recognised this is also a national problem. Sarah Bone illustrated the problem with her experience in her own

228 Written evidence from the Department for Education ([RST0006](#))

229 Written evidence from the Department for Education ([RST0006](#))

230 [Q 13](#) (Russell Hobby)

231 [Q 13](#) (Russell Hobby)

232 [Q 14](#) (Sarah Bone)

233 Department for Education, 'Teaching schools hub': <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-school-hubs#full-publication-update-history> [accessed 17 July 2023]

school that “From the 76 staff [she] inherited in 2013, only nine remain.”²³⁴ Russell Hobby explained that “recruitment of talented teachers into [coastal] communities is harder” for a number of reasons. He cited the deprivation faced in coastal areas, the complex social issues and Sarah Bone referenced the Ofsted rating of schools all of which may result in a struggle to recruit.²³⁵ Russell explained that we have not been able to persuade “teachers of the value and pleasure of working in these communities.”²³⁶

177. Russell Hobby suggested a change of focus “to people switching into teaching later in career than direct graduates.”²³⁷ He explained that coastal towns and communities offer a different lifestyle and different opportunities “but we have not been able to make that pitch.”²³⁸ Teachers joining the profession later in their career may recognise the benefits posed by these areas.
178. Russell did not think “salary is the prime driver” in teaching, but highlighted others factors such as workload, and the time teachers spend in the classroom.²³⁹ He set out that “We see big improvements in retention in schools that are able to increase their PPA [planning, preparation and administration] time.”²⁴⁰ He called for pilot schemes to provide funding to reduce the curriculum time of teachers and to increase their PPA time. He proposed trialling this across a range of areas including coastal communities and then making an assessment of both the impact on retention teaching and the effect on career provision.²⁴¹
179. Tendring District Council and Essex County Council suggested an alternative in providing “a ‘coastal allowance’ for teachers” to address the “chronic” recruitment issues in coastal areas.²⁴²
180. *We acknowledge the steps taken to focus on teacher recruitment and retention and the wider challenges faced in this regard across the country. However, a more targeted approach is needed for areas which have continuing and long term recruitment challenges such as seaside towns and communities. We reiterate the 2019 recommendation: that the Government should review its approach to seaside towns and communities and determine what focused actions can be taken to improve teacher recruitment and retention.*

Employment and skills

Careers provision

181. In 2015 the Government founded the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) to provide support to schools and colleges in coordinating and delivering career guidance. The CEC established the Enterprise Adviser Network, business leaders supporting schools to develop career guidance, and Careers Hubs, to coordinate groups of schools and colleges in local areas to support young people in preparing for work.

234 [Q 11](#) (Sarah Bone)

235 [Q 11](#) (Russell Hobby), [Q 14](#) (Sarah Bone)

236 [Q 11](#) (Russell Hobby)

237 [Q 14](#) (Russell Hobby)

238 [Q 11](#) (Russell Hobby)

239 [Q 13](#) (Russell Hobby)

240 [Q 13](#) (Russell Hobby)

241 [Q 18](#) (Russell Hobby)

242 Written evidence from the Tendring District Council and Essex County Council ([RST0003](#))

182. The Select Committee highlighted the work of the CEC, amongst others, as best practice for facilitating partnership working between Further Education and Higher Education sectors, and local business and industry. The report called for the Government to “enable” this partnership working and disseminate best practice. The Select Committee invited the Government to consider a coastal-specific initiative to form effective partnerships to create a ‘talent pipeline’ to local industries.²⁴³
183. In October 2020 the CEC published an evaluation of the Enterprise Adviser Network and Careers Hubs which found that the schools and colleges within the Network, and in particular those in Careers Hubs, had enabled increased employer encounters for young people and provided them with greater opportunity to gain an understanding of a range of sectors, education options and career paths.²⁴⁴
184. Careers Hubs now have participation from 90 per cent of schools and colleges in England. 18 Careers Hubs cover coastal areas, including Cumbria, Liverpool, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, Coast to Capital, Kent, New Anglia and Tees Valley. The DfE shared examples of coastal career initiatives such as the work of the Heart of the South West Hub establishing connections with Plymouth Manufacturing Group and funding an ‘adopt a school’ programme open to all schools in Plymouth.²⁴⁵
185. The Government’s Skills for Jobs White Paper set out continuing support for the Enterprise Adviser Network and Careers Hubs with the intention to extend Hubs across England and provide training for Careers Leaders who lead on school careers strategies.²⁴⁶
186. The recent Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 enforced the requirement originally known as the Baker Clause to provide pupils with the opportunity to discuss technical education and apprenticeships.²⁴⁷ The Government has also introduced a new primary careers programme with a £2.6 million investment to enable 2,200 primary schools to access the programme.²⁴⁸ Russell Hobby welcomed these initiatives to extend careers advice and noted the primary career guidance will be carried out in some coastal areas.²⁴⁹ He noted the careers system had been dismantled in previous years and with this new impetus “we are now starting to rebuild it.”²⁵⁰
187. Both Russell Hobby and Sarah Bone championed the importance of career provision in schools and the importance of the networks built to facilitate this. Sarah Bone noted the importance of “coupling a broad and balanced

243 *The future of seaside towns*, para 152

244 Careers and Enterprise Network, *Enterprise Adviser Network and Careers Hubs Evaluation Report* (October 2020): https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/media/xnvnop5b/eval_ean_and_hubs_final_281020.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

245 Written evidence from the Department for Education ([RST0006](#))

246 Department for Education, *Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth* (January 2021): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/957856/Skills_for_jobs_lifelong_learning_for_opportunity_and_growth_web_version.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

247 Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, [section 14](#)

248 Department for Education, ‘Careers boost for young people’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/careers-boost-for-young-people> [accessed 28 June 2023]

249 [Q 11](#) (Russell Hobby)

250 [Q 12](#) (Russell Hobby)

curriculum in schools alongside what those career avenues might look like.”²⁵¹ Russell Hobby told us:

“We do not need to encourage people to aim high. We have to show them the steps it takes for them to get there.”²⁵²

188. Russell Hobby noted that the pandemic had provided opportunities for work experience and internships online which:

“Although that is not as good as spending a week in an office, factory or shop and understanding the reality of work, it meant that young people in Scarborough, Hastings and other towns were on a level playing field with young people in London for access to those opportunities.”²⁵³

We hope that these initiatives are not lost as we recover from the pandemic, so opportunities remain open to as many people as possible and reach areas like seaside towns and communities.

189. However, Sarah Bone noted the challenges involved in implementing career provision and instilling the importance of it in schools. She explained her school is in the “top tier of the country” for its Careers Hub and careers advice, but this came at a cost as they have had to spend money the school cannot afford to spare.²⁵⁴ Though we commend this achievement, schools should receive greater support to effect these changes rather than incurring these penalties.
190. Careers guidance and advice goes beyond connectivity with local business and employers. To be truly effective it needs to connect different parts of the education sector, from primary schools and secondary schools to further education colleges and universities, in order to truly demonstrate the range of opportunities and pathways available. We heard encouraging examples from Yorkshire and Brighton of the positive outcomes of building those networks with local education providers, and the effect on developing the aspirations of on students.²⁵⁵
191. **We commend the work being done to improve careers initiatives across schools and industry. This momentum needs to be maintained to ensure students receive the most effective support, experience the career pathways available and access the skills needed.**
192. *The Government’s future careers initiatives should encourage and prioritise partnership working across education sectors and with industry, in particular in coastal and isolated areas. Where best practice has been established this needs to be distributed across areas sharing similar challenges in connecting education with local businesses to create a pathway to support local economies.*

Transport accessibility for students

193. The Select Committee found that post-16 transport costs were an impediment to accessing educational opportunities in some coastal areas. It recommended:

251 [Q 12](#) (Sarah Bone)

252 [Q 12](#) (Russell Hobby)

253 [Q 12](#) (Russell Hobby)

254 [Q 12](#) (Sarah Bone)

255 [Q 18](#) (Sarah Bone, Russell Hobby)

“that the Government funds relevant local authorities to provide full public transport costs for post-16 students in coastal communities”.²⁵⁶

194. The Government Response reasserted the local authority responsibility for 16–19 transport and the flexibility granted by concessionary travel legislation to provide discounted travel for young people. The Response also highlighted that bus operators can also choose to offer a discounted youth travel offer.²⁵⁷
195. There are a number of other initiatives in place to provide support for post-16 travel. In September 2019, a 16–17 Saver railcard was introduced, providing half price rail fares to this age group in England and Wales.²⁵⁸ The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund is also available to support young people in managing travel expenses. From February to May 2019 DfE carried out a consultation on including a travel element to the methodology calculating the 16 to 19 Discretionary Bursary Fund allocation.²⁵⁹ The Government responded to the consultation in September 2019 and confirmed the support to include travel in the methodology. The calculation methodology now includes students costs to support travel and industry placements. Transitional arrangements will be in place until the changes are fully implemented in the 2023–24 academic year.²⁶⁰
196. The National Bus Strategy, *Bus Back Better*, set the expectation that local transport authorities and bus operators should consider youth fares in drawing up BSIPs.²⁶¹ As discussed above, only 34 counties, city regions and unitary authorities initially received central funding to implement BSIPs, and as a result the future of any youth fare initiatives included in unsuccessful BSIPs is unclear. The DfE noted that the £2 bus fare cap currently in place until the end of June 2023, will provide support in accessing bus travel including for apprentices.²⁶²
197. In 2021–22, 17 of the 84 Travel Concession Authorities in England outside London granted a form of concessionary travel to young people, but this varied as to the age group covered and the forms of education covered. At least one commercial bus operator in 70 out of 84 Travel Concession Authorities offered youth concessions.²⁶³ The DfE told us that “many young people have access to some kind of discount or concession on bus or travel, either from

256 *The future of seaside towns*, para 154

257 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, *Government response to the Report of Session 2017–19 of House of Lords’ Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities Select Committee on The Future of Seaside Towns*, CP 102 (5 June 2019): https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/lords-committees/Regenerating-Seaside-Towns/Government_response.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

258 16-17 Saver, ‘16-17 Saver’: <https://www.16-17saver.co.uk/> [accessed 28 June 2023]

259 There are two forms of 16–19 Bursary—a bursary for students in vulnerable groups and a discretionary bursary. Department for Education, ‘16 to 19 discretionary bursary fund: allocation methodology’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/16-to-19-discretionary-bursary-fund-allocation-methodology> [accessed 28 June 2023]

260 Education & Skills Funding Agency, ‘16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide 2022 to 2023 academic year’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2022-to-2023-academic-year/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2022-to-2023-academic-year> [accessed 28 June 2023]

261 Department for Transport, *Bus Back Better* (March 2021): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980227/DfT-Bus-Back-Better-national-bus-strategy-for-England.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

262 Written evidence from the Department for Education (*RST0006*)

263 Department for Transport, ‘Official Statistics: Concessionary travel statistics, England: year ending March 2022’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/concessionary-travel-statistics-year-ending-march-2022/concessionary-travel-statistics-england-year-ending-march-2022> [accessed 28 June 2023]

their local authority, transport providers, or from their school or college.”²⁶⁴ The DfE highlighted a number coastal youth concession schemes including additional support for students on low incomes or with special educational needs in Blackpool, free bus ID cards providing travel discounts for 5–18 year olds in Brighton and free transport for students whose route to school is considered unsafe in Torbay.²⁶⁵

198. The Committee heard positive feedback on the progress made in increasing accessibility to school. Sarah Bone told us:

“Our local transport policy with our local authority is completely fit for purpose. The assessment is appropriate. We make sure that every young person who requires transport to and from school, whether that is on a public bus or, indeed, on one of our free minibuses, is able to get to school. In our experience, that initiative has been really positive.”²⁶⁶

199. However, we continued to hear that transport infrastructure continues to act as a barrier to education and training. Russell Hobby explained that “the barriers to accessing further education, colleges and workplace learning often come back down to transport infrastructure.”²⁶⁷ Both the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership and Tendring District Council and Essex County Council raised the challenge faced by young people in utilising public transport due to lack of frequency or accessibility of the services available.²⁶⁸

200. **The Committee recognises and welcomes the work done by Government to provide greater support for post-16 transport costs. However, transport infrastructure continues to be a barrier to students attending education, training or work experience opportunities. If the Government is to see true levelling up, more needs to be done to ensure that public transport services are sufficient to meet the needs of seaside towns and communities.**

Health and wellbeing

201. The Select Committee concluded in 2019 that:

“It is vital that the Government recognises that there is frequently an additional cost of delivering health services in coastal areas, due to higher proportions of older people, the impact of population transience, the prevalence of poor mental health and geographical isolation. Again, seaside towns are disadvantaged; Government policy, where it pertains to decisions on priorities for investment, with particular regard to national funding formulae, must recognise this.”²⁶⁹

202. In July 2021, the Chief Medical Officer for England published his report, *Health in Coastal Communities*, which focused on the need to improve the health of coastal communities. The report acknowledged the wide ranging and inter-linking factors which impact upon the health of communities including education, employment, housing and environment.

264 Written evidence from the Department for Education ([RST0006](#))

265 Written evidence from the Department for Education ([RST0006](#))

266 [Q 17](#) (Sarah Bone)

267 [Q 15](#) (Russell Hobby)

268 Written evidence from South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership ([RST0001](#)), Tendring District Council and Essex County Council ([RST0003](#))

269 [The future of seaside towns](#), para 242

203. The analysis of the available data in the report “suggests that living on the coastal fringe is associated with an increased risk of ill-health”²⁷⁰ The report also found that Standardised Mortality Ratios for various conditions, including preventable mortality, are “significantly higher in coastal areas compared with non-coastal.”²⁷¹ The data shows there is also a high burden of mental ill-health in coastal communities.
204. The report made three key recommendations:
- The need to establish a cross-government national strategy to improve the health and wellbeing of coastal communities.
 - The effective deployment of health and social care workers in coastal areas.
 - To collect more granular data and carry out actionable research in order to effectively tackle the challenges faced by coastal areas.²⁷²
205. The then Health and Social Care Secretary, the Rt Hon. Sajid Javid MP, welcomed the report and committed to consider the recommendations made. He noted the introduction of the Office for Health Promotion to “drive and support the whole of government to go further in improving people’s health”.²⁷³ The Office for Health Promotion was subsequently renamed as the Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (OHID) which focuses on ensuring “everyone can expect to live more of life in good health” and “levelling up health disparities to break the link between background and prospects for a healthy life”.²⁷⁴
206. The Levelling Up White Paper, published in 2022 set out the Government’s goal that the gap in Health Life Expectancy between local areas where it is highest and lowest will have narrowed by 2030, and by 2035 Healthy Life Expectancy will rise by five years.²⁷⁵ The Paper acknowledges the disparities faced across the country and highlighted the impact of demographics on local health and effect of older populations in coastal areas. The Paper sets out three key areas the Government will be focusing on: improving public health, supporting people to change their food and diet, and tackling diagnostic backlogs.
207. In 2019 the Select Committee welcomed the NHS Long-Term Plan approach which committed to allocate a greater share of funding towards geographies

270 Chief Medical Officer, *Chief Medical Officer’s Annual Report 2021 Health in Coastal Communities* (July 2021) p 193: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005216/cmo-annual_report-2021-health-in-coastal-communities-accessible.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

271 Chief Medical Officer, *Chief Medical Officer’s Annual Report 2021 Health in Coastal Communities* (July 2021) p 184: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005216/cmo-annual_report-2021-health-in-coastal-communities-accessible.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

272 Chief Medical Officer, *Chief Medical Officer’s Annual Report 2021 Health in Coastal Communities* (July 2021): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005216/cmo-annual_report-2021-health-in-coastal-communities-accessible.pdf [accessed 28 June 2023]

273 Department for Health and Social Care, ‘Chief Medical Officer annual report 2021’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chief-medical-officer-annual-report-2021> [accessed 28 June 2023]

274 Department of Health and Social Care, ‘Office for Health Improvement & Disparities’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-health-improvement-and-disparities> [accessed 28 June 2023]

275 *Levelling Up: Levelling Up the United Kingdom*, p 200

with high health inequalities. The Levelling Up White Paper referenced the NHS Long-Term Plan and the subsequent application of the Core20PLUS5 approach which targets the 20% most deprived of the national population plus locally identified population groups such as those with long-term health conditions and ethnic minority communities. The approach identifies five key clinical areas of focus which include maternity, severe mental illness, chronic respiratory disease, early cancer diagnosis and hypertension case-finding.²⁷⁶

208. The Government's Levelling Up Agenda also references the work of OHID and committed to the publication of a White Paper on Health Disparities in 2022 which would set out "a bold ambition for reducing the gap in health outcomes, with a strong focus on prevention and disparities by ethnicity, socioeconomic background and geography."²⁷⁷ The delay in the publication of the White Paper attracted criticism across the sector and in January 2023 the Government announced it would no longer be publishing the Paper. The sector was similarly disappointed, with the Royal College of Physicians continuing to "call for a cross-government strategy to reduce health inequalities that uses every policy lever to tackle the factors that make people ill in the first place".²⁷⁸ The BMA called the decision "appalling" as in order to tackle the health disparities faced a joined up strategy is needed.²⁷⁹ The Government has committed instead to publish a Major Conditions Strategy which "will set out a strong and coherent policy agenda that sets out a shift to integrated, whole-person care." The strategy will focus on key conditions that affect morbidity and mortality and a geographical lens will be applied to address regional disparities. It is anticipated an interim report will be published in summer 2023.²⁸⁰
209. In October 2022, the Government announced a £50million research fund from the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) to tackle health inequalities. 13 local authorities were initially awarded investment to address inequalities and improve public health, five of which have coastal areas.²⁸¹ Local authorities will set up Health Determinants Research Collaborations (HDRCs) to fill knowledge gaps in their areas and target inequalities effectively.²⁸² The NIHR announced a second round of HDRCs in January 2023 with a similar number of HDRCs to be commissioned as

276 NHS England, 'Core20PLUS5 (adults)—an approach to reducing healthcare inequalities': <https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/national-healthcare-inequalities-improvement-programme/core20plus5/> [accessed 28 June 2023]

277 *Levelling Up: Levelling Up the United Kingdom*, p 203

278 Royal College of Physicians, 'Royal College of Physicians responds to government confirmation that Health Disparities White Paper has been scrapped': <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/news/royal-college-physicians-responds-government-confirmation-health-disparities-white-paper-has> [accessed 28 June 2023]

279 BMA, 'Government's scrapping of the Health Disparities White Paper "appalling", says BMA': <https://www.bma.org.uk/bma-media-centre/governments-scrapping-of-the-health-disparities-white-paper-appalling-says-bma> [accessed 28 June 2023]

280 Written question [UIN 128715](#) (Session 2022–23)

281 Aberdeen City Council, Plymouth City Council, Blackpool Council, and Middlesbrough Council and Redcar & Cleveland Council and Medway Council. Middlesbrough Council and Redcar & Cleveland Council and Medway Council are both receiving development funding during 2022 to 2023 with a view to becoming full HDRCs in 2023 to 2024.

282 Department of Health and Social Care, '£50 million to tackle health inequalities through research': <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/50-million-to-tackle-health-inequalities-through-research> [accessed 28 June 2023]

in 2022 with a contact value of up to £5 million over five years. The second round hopes to cover a larger geographical area.²⁸³

210. Data continues to show health disparities in coastal areas, and Professor Whitty has recently stated that, because many people move to coastal areas with existing health conditions, health resources should be targeted towards these areas. Professor Whitty recognised the differences between coastal areas but highlighted that “they are likely more similar to one another than their nearest inland neighbour” and therefore need a strategy to address these areas. Professor Whitty stated that we “need to solve the public health problems of coastal towns if we are to solve the public health problems of the nation as a whole”.²⁸⁴
211. In written evidence to the follow-up inquiry Professor Whitty outlined the positive work being carried out to try and tackle the health challenges faced by coastal communities.²⁸⁵ These included:
- The work of Health Education England (HEE), a non-departmental public body which is part of the NHS focused on the planning, recruitment, education and training of the health workforce, to recruit staff to rural and coastal areas:
 - Four pilots across the East Coast focusing on areas that have the highest indices of multiple deprivation and the lowest workforce per head of population to help to secure the local healthcare workforce.²⁸⁶
 - The Addressing Health Inequalities: Distribution of Medical Speciality Training Programme—which aims to distribute the HEE-funded speciality training posts equitably across the areas that need it the most.²⁸⁷
 - Five new medical schools established in rural and coastal areas including Tyne and Wear, West Lancashire, Essex, Lincolnshire and Kent.
 - The work of local authorities—Professor Whitty highlighted the work of Rother District Council in placing public health at the centre of their local plans in order to utilise the local areas natural resources to support health and “enable residents to live well”.²⁸⁸
212. Professor Whitty said that, despite the work being undertaken, his “view remains that there should be a national strategy for coastal town health

283 National Institute for Health and Care Research, ‘Call for proposals: NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaborations (HDRC) specification document’: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/specification-document-call-for-proposals-nihr-health-determinants-research-collaborations-hdrc/32383> [accessed 28 June 2023]

284 Sky News, “‘If I drink again it’ll kill me’”: Life expectancy in England’s coastal towns is 10 years lower than inland’: <https://news.sky.com/story/if-i-drink-again-itll-kill-me-life-expectancy-in-englands-coastal-towns-is-10-years-lower-than-inland-12823817> [accessed 28 June 2023]

285 Written evidence from Professor Chris Whitty (RST0005)

286 NHS Health Education England, ‘HEE unveils programme to help tackle health inequalities in rural and coastal areas’: <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/news-blogs-events/news/hee-unveils-programme-help-tackle-health-inequalities-rural-coastal-areas> [accessed 28 June 2023]

287 NHS Health Education England, ‘Addressing Health Inequalities: Distribution of Medical Speciality Training Programme’: <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/doctors-training/addressing-health-inequalities-distribution-medical-specialty-training-programme> [accessed 28 June 2023]

288 Written evidence from Professor Chris Whitty (RST0005)

across all the relevant departments.” He believes a strategy would result in “coordinated and strategic actions rather than piecemeal actions” and a “best practice approach” to assist all coastal areas. Professor Whitty also explained he does not believe that the Major Conditions Strategy, which has replaced the anticipated Health Disparities White Paper, is sufficient to address the health disparities faced by coastal communities.²⁸⁹

213. The Committee agrees with Professor Whitty’s call for sustained and collaborative action, as he notes “many of the challenges faced by coastal communities are amenable to strong, targeted, long-term action.” He also warned that “Demographic trends tell us that ageing populations and the associated challenges in coastal areas will only increase” as a result this an issue that urgently needs to be addressed.²⁹⁰

214. The South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership told the Committee that Skegness and Mablethorpe have faced:

“a significant influx of retirees into the area, many in poor health. East Lindsey has around twice the number of over 65s compared to the England average. This has put a significant pressure on local health services, which are modest in scale. The nearest acute hospital is 22 miles away in Boston, but poor connectivity means limited public transport to access this facility.”²⁹¹

Blackpool Council also noted the high levels of physical and mental health issues among both existing residents and those who are moving to the area.²⁹² Tendring District Council and Essex County Council highlighted the opportunity posed by the Government’s devolution reforms, discussed above, in terms of enabling greater integration with the Integrated Care System’s work on public health and prevention work in order “to strengthen health and wellbeing outcomes.”²⁹³

215. The Councils Partnership found that in their areas “health is a key determinant of economic success” and called for:

“the development of a new policy framework which takes account of the opportunities to join up health and care and economic investment to increase the sustainability and viability of coastal settlements particularly in relation to primary care.”²⁹⁴

216. The Centre for Coastal Communities at the University of Plymouth said that coastal digital health hubs should be created to “facilitate innovation, development and adoption of technologies and data processing for healthcare beyond the hospital, particularly in areas that are digitally immature, and which have demographically older and geographically dispersed populations.”²⁹⁵

217. ***We welcome the targeted research to effectively identify and address health inequalities at a local level. We recommend that any findings***

289 Written evidence from Professor Chris Whitty ([RST0005](#))

290 Written evidence from Professor Chris Whitty ([RST0005](#))

291 Written evidence from South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership ([RST0001](#))

292 Written evidence from Blackpool Council ([RST0002](#))

293 Written evidence from Tendring District Council and Essex County Council ([RST0003](#))

294 Written evidence from South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership ([RST0001](#))

295 Written evidence from the Centre for Coastal Communities, University of Plymouth ([RST0004](#))

from these collaborations should be shared with similar areas, to ensure that coastal areas which face similar challenges can apply any best practice in their own areas.

218. *We commend the work by Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer for England, to address health disparities in coastal areas. The Committee recommends the Government reconsider the recommendations made by the Chief Medical Officer, in particular the need for a national strategy, and consider whether its current broader approach is sufficiently effective in providing targeted support to the areas, such as coastal towns and communities, that need it the most.*

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Below is a list of all of the Committee's conclusions and recommendations (recommendations appear in italics).

Coastal communities policy and coordination

1. *The Committee believes greater coordination and recognition is needed for seaside towns and communities. The Committee recommends that the Government allocates responsibility for seaside towns and communities to a Ministerial portfolio in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. This will create a point of reference for local areas and key stakeholders, and demonstrate the importance of these areas in achieving the levelling up agenda. (Paragraph 25)*
2. *The Minister with this portfolio should attend all meetings of the interministerial Group on Levelling Up to ensure that a coastal lens can be applied to the topics discussed. (Paragraph 26)*
3. *The Committee has heard again about the distinctive set of challenges faced by coastal communities. The Government should work with the Local Government Association, coastal interest groups, the private sector, the third sector and other key stakeholders to develop a coastal communities strategy in order to demonstrate clear mechanisms to successfully address the long-standing disparities faced by seaside towns and communities. A draft strategy should be put to the House of Commons Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee to ensure effective scrutiny of the strategy ahead of implementation. This work should be started as a matter of urgency to ensure that disparities do not become further entrenched. (Paragraph 27)*

Support for regeneration—leadership

4. The Committee recognises the complexity of the challenge faced in integrating LEPs into local democratic institutions and welcomes the further consultation being carried out to ensure future integration and funding changes can be managed effectively. We encourage the Government to respond promptly to the findings to give clarity for both LEPs and local authorities. The work achieved by LEPs and the ongoing work they are part of must not be lost as the transition takes place. (Paragraph 36)
5. *The Committee believes the relationship between local authorities and the private sector is integral to the regeneration of seaside towns and communities and we urge the Government to ensure that this is not lost as local authorities begin to undertake the functions of LEPs. The private sector must be kept informed by local democratic institutions what form these new integrated responsibilities will take so they have a clear understanding of how to maintain their involvement in the development of local communities. The new structures integrating LEP responsibilities must facilitate frank and open input from local businesses. (Paragraph 37)*
6. *The Committee continues to believe that any structures responsible for the leadership of the development and economic growth of areas with a coastal aspect should ensure there is an emphasis on addressing the needs of coastal communities. Coastal communities and their needs and priorities must not be lost amid broader local authority economic agendas, both national and local. (Paragraph 38)*
7. *The need for collaboration and information sharing across areas which face similar challenges, such as seaside towns and communities, remains essential. The Government should consider how the valuable work of networks can be built into*

the planned integration of LEPs into local authorities. The Government must consult the Local Government Association and interested parties to consider how information sharing and a collective voice can be created for this new integrated structure. (Paragraph 39)

8. The Committee welcomes steps to grant greater powers to local areas to enable greater place-based decision making. It remains essential that coastal towns and communities are not lost amongst the challenges and competing concerns that local authorities face, so future deals and local authority arrangements should reflect the needs of seaside towns and communities in their remit and appropriate geographical area. (Paragraph 48)

Support for regeneration—funding and delivery

9. *The Committee supports the Government’s decision to review the current funding landscape in light of the universal feedback regarding the cost and complexity involved in accessing the currently available funds. The decision to move to a more formula-based approach should ensure areas of greatest need, including seaside towns and communities, receive the funding they require. We recommend the Government consult on the current formula used to determine the areas of most need under the UKSPF to help inform any changes needed to the future formula-based funding stream. We urge the Government to publish its new funding plan as soon as possible. (Paragraph 85)*
10. Future funding streams should ensure that seaside towns and communities receive the additional support they need and recognition of the increased costs involved in supporting these communities. (Paragraph 86)
11. *Seaside towns and communities face a combination of deeply entrenched issues. To address these successfully, and make meaningful and sustained improvements, requires long-term consistent commitment, not a succession of short-term initiatives. The Government must find a way to provide the long-term funding that seaside towns and communities need to support effective regeneration and address systemic challenges. (Paragraph 87)*
12. *We recommend that the Government reviews the local government funding formula to assess its effectiveness in providing the level of support needed in coastal towns and communities. (Paragraph 90)*
13. *The Government should ensure that effective work is carried out to ensure that the funding streams made available are marketed to encourage private sector industry investment to match or contribute. More needs to be done to ensure that public funding streams are used to lever private investment in coastal areas to enable regeneration to take place. (Paragraph 94)*
14. *The Committee welcomes the announcement of Levelling Up Partnerships and is encouraged by the Government’s approach of working closely with local areas to ensure tailored approaches to tackle key concerns for those areas. The Government should ensure there is an assessment of what worked in pilot areas and to learn from this for future Levelling Up Partnerships. The Government must also establish effective mechanisms to share experiences and best practice from Levelling Up Partnerships with other local authorities facing similar challenges, such as other seaside towns and communities. We understand Levelling Up Partnerships cannot take place in every location across the UK, but it is essential that lessons learned are shared in order to assist in bringing about effective change across the country. We recommend that the Government publish its mechanisms to share best practice before*

the end of the year so local authorities know how this will be accessed. (Paragraph 103)

15. *The Government must evaluate the effectiveness of these Partnerships to identify what works best and consider what schemes or approaches could best be used in future to assist more areas. (Paragraph 104)*

Connectivity

16. *Poor transport connectivity continues to blight seaside towns and communities, and sufficient progress has not been made to address this. The Committee recognises the efforts made in subsidies and funding streams. However the Government needs to go further to tackle systemic connectivity issues. The fundamental problem has not changed since 2019, and the Committee reiterates the 2019 recommendation that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities should work with the Department for Transport to ensure that areas of most need are properly prioritised for planning and investment. The current approach is clearly not effective, and innovative solutions are needed to provide transport networks that work for coastal areas. (Paragraph 127)*
17. *The Committee is disappointed in the progress that has been made to rectify the rail network losses resulting from the Beeching Report. More needs to be done to ensure that investment can continue in this area to protect those communities at the end of the line and build sustainable and effective connectivity. (Paragraph 128)*
18. *Progress has been made but digital connectivity remains a challenge in coastal areas. The Committee reiterates the need to prioritise digital connectivity in coastal areas, particularly in light of the lack of progress with transport options. Improved digital connectivity will enable coastal areas to capitalise upon the changed ways of working and the opportunities this presents for greater access to education and employment. (Paragraph 145)*

Education and skills: stimulating an entrepreneurial culture

19. *The need to provide additional support to areas struggling with educational attainment and social mobility is clear. However, it is concerning that the Government has introduced a further initiative to tackle these issues without clearly demonstrating how this will produce better outcomes than the Opportunity Areas programme. (Paragraph 161)*
20. *The Committee recommends that the Government keep the Education Investment Areas and Priority Education Investment Areas selected under review to assess whether these are effectively targeting the areas of greatest need. (Paragraph 162)*
21. *It is clear that different areas face different educational challenges, but where there is commonality, such as in coastal towns and communities, an emphasis should be placed on information sharing where interventions under the Education Investment Areas programme have been demonstrated to be effective. Areas which have not been included within the EIAs should also be able to benefit from the lessons learned. The Department for Education should ensure it provides collated examples of best practice and shares the progress made. (Paragraph 163)*
22. *The Government must ensure there is no repeat of the ad hoc extensions to the Opportunity Areas programme. The educational challenges faced by coastal communities, and other areas, are long-term and therefore EIAs and PEIAs must be properly organised as multi-year investments in order to tackle these. Schools need certainty. (Paragraph 164)*

23. *We acknowledge the steps taken to focus on teacher recruitment and retention and the wider challenges faced in this regard across the country. However, a more targeted approach is needed for areas which have continuing and long term recruitment challenges such as seaside towns and communities. We reiterate the 2019 recommendation: that the Government should review its approach to seaside towns and communities and determine what focused actions can be taken to improve teacher recruitment and retention. (Paragraph 180)*
24. We commend the work being done to improve careers initiatives across schools and industry. This momentum needs to be maintained to ensure students receive the most effective support, experience the career pathways available and access the skills needed. (Paragraph 191)
25. *The Government's future careers initiatives should encourage and prioritise partnership working across education sectors and with industry, in particular in coastal and isolated areas. Where best practice has been established this needs to be distributed across areas sharing similar challenges in connecting education with local businesses to create a pathway to support local economies. (Paragraph 192)*
26. The Committee recognises and welcomes the work done by Government to provide greater support for post-16 transport costs. However, transport infrastructure continues to be a barrier to students attending education, training or work experience opportunities. If the Government is to see true levelling up, more needs to be done to ensure that public transport services are sufficient to meet the needs of seaside towns and communities. (Paragraph 200)

Health and wellbeing

27. *We welcome the targeted research to effectively identify and address health inequalities at a local level. We recommend that any findings from these collaborations should be shared with similar areas, to ensure that coastal areas which face similar challenges can apply any best practice in their own areas. (Paragraph 217)*
28. *We commend the work by Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer for England, to address health disparities in coastal areas. The Committee recommends the Government reconsider the recommendations made by the Chief Medical Officer, in particular the need for a national strategy, and consider whether its current broader approach is sufficiently effective in providing targeted support to the areas, such as coastal towns and communities, that need it the most. (Paragraph 218)*

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF MEMBERS AND DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Members

Lord Bach
 Lord Bichard
 Lord Blencathra
 Lord Collins of Highbury
 Lord Gardiner of Kimble
 Lord Haskel
 Earl Howe *
 Lord Judge (until 27 April 2023)
 Earl of Kinnoull (from 28 April 2023)
 Baroness Scott of Needham Market
 Lord Taylor of Holbeach
 Baroness Walmsley

The following members of the former Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities participated in the meetings:

Lord Bassam of Brighton
 Lord Lucas (took Baroness Wyld's place on evidence session on 28 March 2023)
 Lord McNally
 Baroness Valentine
 Baroness Wyld

Declarations of interests

Lord Bach
No interests to declare

Lord Bassam of Brighton
I currently work as a job share as Co-Director of Place and Levelling Up for a national charity—Business in the Community (Bitc). Our work involves working in a number of locations nationally which include seaside towns such as Blackpool.
I am one of two Labour Shadow Ministers focusing on the work of the DCMS

Lord Bichard
No interests to declare

Lord Blencathra
No interests to declare

Lord Collins of Highbury
No interests to declare

Lord Gardiner of Kimble
No interests to declare

Lord Haskel
No interests to declare

Lord Judge (until 27 April 2023)
No interests declared

Earl of Kinnoull (from 28 April 2023)
No interests to declare

Lord Lucas

I live in Eastbourne, a seaside town, and play an active role in its regeneration

Lord McNally

Chair of the Fleetwood Trust (charity seeking to restore old Fleetwood Hospital into a Community Service Hub)

Member of the Blackpool National Advisory Board

Baroness Scott of Needham Market

No interests to declare

Lord Taylor of Holbeach

Former chairman of the visitor economy sub-group of the midlands engine APPG

Current member of the midlands engine APPG

Baroness Valentine

I work for Business in the Community 2 days a week as Director of Place. In that capacity I sponsor business led interventions in several places around the UK. Of these, the only one on the coast is Blackpool. Our intention is to intervene over the long term in such a way as to facilitate transformational, positive and long-lasting change in the places where we operate. Local funding to support activity is sourced from local businesses and from the council.

I work alongside Lord Bassam at Business in the Community. I also liaise with Lord McNally on some of the Blackpool issues.

Baroness Walmsley

No interests to declare

Baroness Wyld

Non-executive board member, Ofsted

Member of Court, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne

* Earl Howe has recused himself from this inquiry on the grounds of ministerial propriety.

A full list of members' interests can be found in the Register of Lords' Interests: <https://members.parliament.uk/members/lords/interests/register-of-lords-interests>

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF WITNESSES

Evidence is published online at <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7311/regenerating-seaside-towns-and-communities-followup/publications/> and available for inspection at the Parliamentary Archives (020 7219 3074).

Evidence received by the Committee is listed below in alphabetical order:

Blackpool Council	<u>RST0002</u>
Sarah Bone, Member, Association of School and College Leaders Council, and Headteacher at Headlands School	<u>QQ 10–21</u>
Alan Cavill, Director of Communication and Regeneration, Blackpool Council	<u>QQ 1–9</u>
Centre for Coastal Communities, University of Plymouth	<u>RST0004</u>
Daniel Davies, Chief Executive and Founder, Rockpoint Leisure and Chair, Institute of Licensing	<u>QQ 1–9</u>
Dehenna Davison MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Levelling Up), DLUHC	<u>QQ 22–35</u>
Department for Education	<u>RST0006</u>
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	<u>RST0007</u>
Essex County Council and Tendring District Council	<u>RST0003</u>
Will Garton, Director General for Levelling Up, DLUHC	<u>QQ 22–35</u>
Russell Hobby, Chief Executive Officer, Teach First	<u>QQ 10–21</u>
Rebecca MacDonald-Lofts, Lead Officer, Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group	<u>QQ 1–9</u>
John McManus, Deputy Director, Regeneration Delivery Unit, DLUHC	<u>QQ 22–35</u>
South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership	<u>RST0001</u>
Tendring District Council and Essex County Council	<u>RST0003</u>
Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer for England	<u>RST0005</u>

APPENDIX 3: ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASCL	Association of School and College Leaders
CMO	Chief Medical Officer
DfE	Department for Education
DfT	Department for Transport
DHSC	Department for Health and Social Care
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
GLA	Greater London Authority
IMG	Interministerial Group
LEAP	London Economic Action Partnership
LEPs	Local Enterprise Partnerships
LGA	Local Government Association
LGA Coastal SIG	Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
OHID	Office for Health Improvement and Disparities