Making it happen:
Urban renaissance and prosperity in our Core Cities
A Tale of Eight Cities
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Foreword by the
Deputy Prime Minister

There’s a quiet revolution taking place in our leading cities. Places that were once the engine room of the industrial revolution, employing millions in mills, factories, ports and shipyards, are learning new ways to create wealth in a global economy where brain has replaced brawn.

Our core cities – those that occupy a special place in the fortunes of their regions because of their size and significance – are the subject of this short report. In these cities the urban renaissance is gathering pace and civic confidence is building. New investment from the public and private sectors is creating sustainable communities from abandoned land, buildings, canal banks and quaysides.

Take a look at the centres of Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle, or any of our core cities. They have been transformed in recent years, and are now homes to new populations of city-dwellers and workers. In Manchester, prestigious new shops, offices and homes for 15,000 people have sprung from the city centre shattered by the IRA in 1996. In Birmingham, the city centre has been rescued from motorway madness and returned to pedestrians. The hated Bullring Centre is making way for some of the best new shopping in Europe. Farther north, Newcastle and Gateshead are working together to regenerate a riverfront that offers world class cultural attractions against the spectacular backdrop of the Tyne.

Our cities are back and the reasons are simple. They remain the centres for wealth creation, trade and exchange. The old industrial economy may have gone, but cities are as important as ever. Only our great cities have the infrastructure necessary to create wealth and prosperity in a sustainable fashion. They are home to great universities, to theatres, orchestras and sport. They are the centres of communication and connection, whether rail, road or air. They are the location for finance, newspapers and television. They are places of great architecture and wonderful parks and squares.

In his new review of the skills needed to deliver sustainable communities, Sir John Egan has pointed to the importance of visionary civic leadership and working across established professional
boundaries. All our core cities are good examples of putting this approach into action. Who can forget Manchester’s Commonwealth Games? Who isn’t looking forward to Liverpool’s Capital of Culture year in 2008? Who can fail to be impressed by the partnerships in all our core cities that are bringing new investment, new attractions, and new populations?

This rebirth of cities is inspiring, but of course, there remains much more to do. There are too many tracts of poor housing and too many isolated and excluded communities. But we are making great strides in tackling these deep-seated problems. Our neighbourhood renewal strategy is helping to transform many of the poorest neighbourhoods, and our new Housing Pathfinder programme is investing £500 million into the long-term regeneration of areas of unpopular housing. The new freedoms and flexibilities for local government are also helping to deliver greater opportunities for local communities to set their own priorities.

Our core cities are the litmus test of our plans for regional prosperity and sustainable communities. If these cities are successful, then their surrounding towns and regions will also benefit. Equally, if they are failing, then so too, will their regions. This is the lesson from across Europe, where successful core cities and successful regions go hand in hand. It is a message that also stands behind the work with the northern and midlands Regional Development Agencies, developing new inter-regional growth strategies that can capitalise on the existing assets and linkages between cities and their regions.

I am confident that our cities are set to capitalise on their recent successes, and build their reputations as the locations of choice for investors and residents alike. Buoyed by strong and stable national economic conditions, their economies are growing, their populations are increasing and their quality of life is improving. City leaders and their regional partners are already ‘making it happen’. Strong and vibrant cities have always been the benchmark of civilised and successful societies. In today’s competitive and globalised world order, that remains as true as ever.

John Prescott, MP
Deputy Prime Minister
Executive Summary

Our eight regional Core Cities – Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield – have undergone a renaissance in recent times. A new confidence is evident in the growth of these cities, where the skylines are now dominated by cranes and internationally acclaimed new buildings.

The Core Cities are leading the way in creating sustainable communities, improving the quality of life of their citizens and reviving local economies. They play a crucial role in regional economies – strong cities mean strong regions and vice versa.

This revival has been underpinned by an unprecedented period of economic stability thanks to sound national policies. Low inflation, low interest rates, record levels of public and private investment, and rising levels of employment have provided the opportunity for prosperity and growth – and a better quality of life in every region.

Since 1997, the Government has given local authorities and the regions a greater chance to improve their performance and develop capability, capacity and confidence.

The Core Cities have grasped these opportunities, achieving recovery from the boom bust cycles of the 1980’s and early 1990’s. There’s still a long way to go – comparison with European city regions shows us that. But the Core Cities have been laying strong foundations for success through:

Record investment:

A partnership of Government, local authority and European funding through Objectives 1 and 2 and the New Deal for Communities has brought record levels of investment and has unlocked new forms of public/private finance.

New regeneration and economic investment bodies such as the Urban Regeneration Companies and the Regional Development Agencies are promoting jobs and growth.

Historic underinvestment in housing is being tackled by modernising public housing, providing more affordable homes, and building new homes.
Record levels of jobs:
Jobs have been created much faster in the Core Cities than the overall rate for England. Thanks to national economic stability, Core Cities have been building stronger and more diverse economies – particularly new jobs in technology led, cultural and creative industries.

New confidence for people to live and work in cities:
People are coming back to our major cities. We have reversed the outward flow of people and retail investment leaving for the suburbs, with more people coming back and breathing new life into our city centres.

People are attracted back by massive improvements to civic squares, parks, open spaces, canals and riversides – high quality architecture and urban design coming together to create a “wow” factor.

Educational standards are rising and crime rates are falling – people feel that cities are safer, cleaner, greener.

Improved local leadership:
All this has happened because of stronger local leadership and dynamic partnership working – bringing national, local and European investment together to create stronger cities in stronger regions. Successful, sustainable cities in successful, sustainable regions are key to making this country more productive and more competitive.

A lot’s been done. Still more is left to do. But the Core Cities have turned a corner. People are coming back to cleaner, safer, greener cities. Economic success, social justice and sustainable communities are being created through leadership and partnership.
Setting the Scene:
Cities play a crucial role in our regional and national life. They are the anchors of their wider regional economies, homes to millions of people and the centres of exchange, culture and communication. But their contribution has often been underestimated and insufficiently recognised. Our eight core regional cities – Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield – have undergone a renaissance in recent times.

They are leading the way in creating sustainable communities, improving the quality of life for their citizens and reviving their local economies to provide a firm foundation for their own economic and social regeneration and that of their wider regions.

Sir John Egan was invited by the Deputy Prime Minister to review the professional skills that we need to deliver our plans for sustainable communities. His report – Skills for Sustainable Communities – recognises the central importance of strong civic leadership and successful partnership working. The Core Cities provide many excellent examples of how the review’s conclusions can be put into practice, and what can be achieved when empowered local leadership is combined with effective partnerships at city, regional and national levels.

The economic and urban renaissance of the Core Cities is all the more impressive when compared to the challenges they faced in weathering the economic downturn of the 1980s. In many cities, the collapse of employment was huge and entire communities lost their traditional economic base within a few years. The cities responses to these traumas was to put in place new strategies for managing change and renewing prosperity, acknowledging that old industries were often gone forever. But, by building on their indigenous assets and the underlying strengths of many of their communities, they have been able to attract new industries and wealth.

This revival has been helped by the macro-economic stability provided by sound national economic stewardship. Low inflation, low interest rates and rising levels of employment and training have provided the opportunity to achieve increasing prosperity and a better quality of life in every region and city.

In a highly globalised economy, successful national economic performance rests on every region and locality performing to its full economic potential by harnessing their local strengths. Stronger and more competitive cities can, and are, increasingly benefiting their surrounding regions by spreading economic growth and prosperity more widely.
Since 1997 the Government has put in place a range of measures to give local authorities and regions the capability, capacity and confidence to improve their performance, and to build on strengths and opportunities as well as addressing problems. The participation of local communities in developing strategies that meet their needs, through initiatives like the New Deal for Communities, has been central to their success.

This work is bearing fruit, and there are plenty of signs of revival, but much more remains to be done. Recent research by the Core Cities Working Group and ODPM on the relative performance of English core cities against their European counterparts, shows that whilst our major regional cities are getting better, they need to work harder to catch up with the best cities in mainland Europe.

The figure shows that large cities tend to perform well economically. German cities, in particular, perform very well reflecting the close relationship between economically strong cities in strongly performing regional economies.

Cities, Regions and Europe
The evidence from both Europe and England is that cities can help themselves by devising clear visions for long term regeneration and by constructing strategic partnerships to help shape their future.
Europe’s most successful economies are underpinned by equally successful regions and strong regional cities. The implications for this country are clear. Without strong, well performing Core Cities, our regions will continue to under-perform.

It is equally clear that the many examples of Core City renaissance and renewal have involved the building of strong partnerships between the respective city local authorities, their regional agencies and, in many cases, the European Union. All the Core Cities have benefited from EU Structural Funds, and in many cases these have been essential to the delivery of their plans for regeneration in conjunction with other public and private sector investment. Successful city regions and successful regional economies are not alternatives. Both are essential to secure greater growth and economic success in the European and global economies.

Government’s firm commitment to enhancing regional devolution and responsibilities, including the opportunity to create elected Regional Assemblies in the Northern regions, will enable our Core Cities to strengthen the role they play in their wider regional settings.

Core Cities –
Signs of Renewal and Success:

Improved local leadership and partnership

Building strong local leadership and innovative partnerships have been essential to the Core Cities taking effective action to improve their performance and gain effective engagement and confidence with stakeholders at all levels.

The Core Cities have demonstrated improved local leadership and governance in a number of ways:

♦ By better co-ordination of policies and strategies at local level, involving the private and community sectors.
   All of the Core Cities have set up Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) which bring together a range of public, private and community stakeholders to agree Community Strategies for their areas. Local partners, working through the LSPs, are taking many of the major decisions to improve the quality of life in the local area. In some cases these have built on earlier, similar initiatives.

♦ By more effective partnership working between central and local government, regional bodies, and other key stakeholders.

Newcastle –
Gateshead Millennium Bridge

This links new arts and cultural projects on Gateshead Quays and Newcastle Quayside with a range of leisure and cultural amenities. Colloquially known as the ‘winking eye’ bridge, this is the first opening bridge across the Tyne for 100 years.
Each of the Core Cities recently produced a Prospectus at the Deputy Prime Minister’s invitation. These are excellent examples of Core Cities working collaboratively in many cases with neighbouring authorities, sub-regional partnerships, Regional Development Agencies and other partners.

Leeds Initiative
Anticipating the development of LSPs by a decade, Leeds City Council established the Leeds Initiative in 1990, bringing together public, private and community interests across the city, to facilitate joint working towards a series of common objectives. The partnership has flourished, gradually expanding its remit from the renewal of the city centre and the management of regeneration funding, to developing an early Community Strategy, the ‘Vision for Leeds I’, in 1998. This strategy has been recognised as an example of European good practice in urban governance (Urban Exchange Initiative, Council of Ministers, June 1998). Accredited as an LSP in 2002, the Leeds Initiative continues to provide a sense of vision and purpose, and opportunities for joint planning, joint ventures and networking.

Birmingham City Region Forum
This brings together the Leaders and Chief Executives of 9 local authorities in the Birmingham City Region together with Chairs and Chief Executives of Advantage West Midlands, the West Midlands Regional Assembly and the Director of the Government Office for the West Midlands. Its aim is to enhance the contribution of the Birmingham City Region to the national agenda by promoting its competitiveness and renaissance agendas within the context of the West Midlands Regional Economic Strategy, the draft Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands and aspirations of LSPs.

Under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) framework, the majority of the Core Cities have been classified as good councils which are well placed to further improve the way they work and the services that they provide to local people. The most recent round of CPA results announced in December 2003, highlighted that Liverpool had made significant improvements in areas such as education and environmental services resulting in a move from ‘fair’ to ‘good’. All of our Core Cities must continue to use CPA as a tool to help them deliver the quality services that our communities demand.
Improved economic performance
The Core Cities have achieved a great deal in modernising their economies and finding new sources of employment and wealth creation.

The decline of their traditional manufacturing industries, in response to intense global competition, required a dramatic transformation to avoid a return to previous ‘boom and bust’ economic cycles where more peripheral cities and regions gained less benefit from national growth than southern regions. The response has been to find new sources of job growth in the global knowledge based economy where the Core Cities have been performing relatively well, based in part on their local universities and access to international networks.

This transformation has been helped by the Government’s central economic success in maintaining high and stable levels of growth and employment. But it has also required central and local government, as well as the private and community sectors, to strengthen the long-term building blocks of growth, innovation, skills and enterprise, and build on the inherent strengths of each city and region.

Much of the recent growth in jobs has been in technology-led, cultural and creative industries, which tend to focus on city locations. This partly reflects the concentration of Higher Educational Institutions and universities in cities (the Core Cities have 19 universities between them) and also the large concentrations of ‘customers’ for such industries. The tolerant atmosphere offered by many cities attracts people with varied backgrounds and attitudes, and offers an environment where creative, innovative and entrepreneurial activities can flourish.

Commonwealth Games Stadium/Sportcity, Manchester
This was the catalyst for the regeneration of East Manchester. In addition to producing world class sports facilities the Games resulted in the impetus for the new town centre. Hosting the Games resulted in new jobs both during and after the construction phase, and put East Manchester on the map as far as visitors and investors were concerned.
Sustained period of growth
All of the Core Cities have experienced sustained growth in recent years. Between 1995 and 2001 there has been a very substantial increase in Gross Value Added (GVA – the key indicator of local economic growth) in all cities. At 44.4 per cent Liverpool’s per capita increase in GVA was well above the national average of 35.0 per cent.

Sheffield’s economy exemplifies the challenge of responding to economic change. Heavy reliance on steel production made the task of modernising its economic base greater than in many cities of comparable size. The city lost a quarter of all its jobs in the 1980’s but since the mid 1990’s has created 5,000 net new jobs a year. Inward investors are now creating 2,000 jobs a year. From 1996 – 98 it’s GDP per head rose faster than in most regional cities.

The City’s Advanced Manufacturing Park is a high profile, flagship project which will provide a nationally recognised focus for research based advanced manufacturing. It is pioneering the commercialisation of high-level university research. The catalyst was the relationship between the University of Sheffield and the Boeing Company which is establishing an Aerospace Manufacturing Research Centre in the Park. This is attracting other research-based businesses to locate there.

Sustained period of growth
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Growth in the core cities economies – 1995 and 2001

More jobs
Almost two and a quarter million people work in the Core Cities, a rise of 11 per cent between 1995 and 2002. All of the Core Cities have seen substantial increases in their local employment numbers, often linked to dynamic new economic sectors. Some cities, especially Manchester, Liverpool and Sheffield are also clearly outperforming their wider regions in terms of employment growth.

Total Employment 1995 and 2002

Lower unemployment
The Core Cities have also seen some of the most substantial falls in unemployment rates. Although there remains more to be done to tackle residual unemployment in the cities, in recent years rates have fallen much closer to national levels, and in some of the Core Cities, such as Bristol and Leeds, rates are now lower than the national average.

Unemployment rate 1996 and 2002
City centre renaissance

The dramatic regeneration of the centres of all the Core Cities in recent years provides the most visible evidence of their renaissance. The backdrop of national economic stability has provided a solid foundation for local economic strategies and public-private partnerships, which have attracted huge investment into city centre initiatives in recent years. Major public investment in improvements to civic squares, parks, open spaces, canal and river frontages, has often provided the necessary catalyst to encourage major investors to commit private sector funds.

Ironically, this investment has often been attracted by the improved quality of life and growing appeal of city centre living that has become possible with the passing of more traditional ‘dirty’ industries. A new generation of city centre residents and workers are being drawn to the wide range of retail, entertainment, cultural and sporting facilities that are on offer. It has also provided an opportunity to turn old industrial liabilities such as abandoned mills, warehouses and canals, into assets, through imaginative restoration and regeneration projects.

This city centre renaissance has been helped by the firm planning restrictions placed on new ‘out of town’ shopping centres. For many years, established city centres were facing deteriorating retail fortunes. But the tide has turned decisively in favour of town and city centres. Since 2000, more new retail floorspace has been completed in major shopping centres in towns and cities than has been built out of town.

These developments have been complemented by the construction of major new cultural, sporting and building projects, often with iconic architecture, which have transformed the image of the Core Cities. Examples abound but significant schemes include the new Millennium Bridge between Newcastle and Gateshead, which complements the new Baltic art gallery and the Sage Music Centre, the Winter Gardens in Sheffield, the Urbis Building in Manchester, the Bristol Harbourside and Brindley Place in Birmingham.

Working with Government, the Core Cities have also succeeded in attracting prestigious global events, the most spectacular of which has been Manchester’s hosting of the Commonwealth Games in 2002. Birmingham hosted the EU G8 Summit in 1998 and Newcastle is due to host the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting in 2005. Liverpool is set to be the European Capital of Culture in 2008.
Re-populating the Core Cities
Population loss has been endemic to most of the Core Cities for decades, but this too is now changing for the better. Birmingham, Bristol and Leeds have all gained population between 1991 and 2001, and the rate of population loss in the other major cities has declined dramatically. In all cases, there has been an increase in the populations of the central city areas and this is expected to grow substantially in the next few years as major new residential developments are planned in all of the Core Cities.

Manchester’s city centre population has risen from under 1,000 in 1991 to over 15,000 today. Liverpool’s has increased from 2,300 to more than 9,000 over a similar period. Birmingham, Leeds and Sheffield have experienced similar growth.

Improving parks and green spaces
All of our Core Cities enjoy a rich legacy of Victorian and Edwardian parks and green spaces, which have all too often been sadly neglected in recent decades. But the quality of many of these is now improving – often dramatically so. Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield, Nottingham and Newcastle all contain parks and green spaces which have received the coveted Green Flag Award. These awards recognise an ‘excellent’ standard in their design, management and maintenance. Bristol, Sheffield and Liverpool have green spaces which have received a Green Pennant award. These awards acknowledge high quality green spaces that are managed by voluntary and community groups.

Better urban design and architecture
Our major cities enjoy some of the best urban architectural heritage and this rich legacy is providing the backdrop for many of the exceptional new buildings and public squares that are emerging. Many of the world’s leading architects and designers are working in our Core Cities. Daniel Libeskind’s Imperial War Museum in Salford Quays, Manchester, Norman Foster’s Sage Music Centre on Tyneside and Future Systems’ dramatic new Selfridges store in Birmingham are just three examples of the exemplary quality that the Core Cities are achieving.

Fourth Grace, Liverpool
To complete the transformation of Liverpool City Centre by 2008 a Fourth Grace (to complement the Three Graces) will become the centre piece of the new waterfront. The venue will be for mixed business, residential and cultural use. It will also include public spaces for viewing the waterfront area and housing a range of leisure attractions.

Sheffield Peace Gardens
The Peace Gardens outside Sheffield Town Hall – a good example of high quality urban design – were opened in 1998. Other transformational public realm projects delivered in the city centre include the Millennium Galleries and the Winter Gardens.
Improving housing conditions

The improving prospects of the Core Cities is reflected in the revival of local housing markets. In many cases house prices are now close to, or above the national average, often following many years of weak demand. Recently, house prices have been moving upwards most quickly in many places outside the south east. This partly reflects people’s assessment that the Core Cities are attractive places to live and a good long-term investment.

Investment in local housing stock – delivering decent homes

Many of the Core Cities have faced long term under-investment in their local authority housing estates. New programmes to tackle this legacy of neglect are beginning to show real improvements in the condition of much public and social housing. Since 1999 expenditure on local authority housing stock in the Core Cities has increased to £301 million in 2002/03, despite a fall in the overall housing stock of 13 per cent. Between 2001 and 2003 the core cities reduced the number of non-decent homes in their local authority stock by around 17 per cent.

New ‘arms-length’ management organisations (ALMOs) are bringing the maintenance and management of Council housing closer to residents, and are also attracting very substantial new investment. A total of £92 million has been allocated to Leeds for its six ALMOs and £113 million has been allocated for ALMO schemes in Newcastle and Sheffield with further investment planned in future years. In addition, around £200 million of Public Finance Initiative (PFI) credits are being made available to the Core Cities for new public-private investment schemes for social housing.

Tackling empty housing and low demand

In the northern and midlands Core Cities the effects of de-industrialisation and population losses has led to serious problems with falling demand for housing in some communities. This often presents a dramatic contrast to the vibrant housing markets in nearby city centres and successful suburbs.

Government is determined to help overcome these problems by providing core funding for the long term transformation of housing and community conditions through the £500 million Housing Market Renewal programme.

Bristol Harbourside: Pero’s Bridge

The rejuvenated Harbourside area of Bristol includes Pero’s Bridge, part of a network of new/improved streets and spaces which is creating a new dynamic to the city centre.
There are Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders in five of the Core Cities – Sheffield, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool & Newcastle. The aims of the Pathfinders are to increase housing opportunity and choice in dynamic, cohesive neighbourhoods that provide the best quality of life in a healthy, safe and sustainable environment. In each of these, comprehensive sub-regional renewal strategies have been drawn up, and funding packages will reflect the scale of the challenges that are identified.

Sustainable Communities – improving schools, tackling social exclusion and reducing crime

Social exclusion and poverty remain key challenges in all of our Core Cities. Despite the very considerable improvements in the overall economic picture, there are still too many communities where young people are failing to achieve satisfactory educational standards, and where worklessness is at unacceptable levels.

But again, there are encouraging signs of improvement. Government supported programmes such as the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and the New Deal for Communities (NDC) are helping to make a real difference in many of the poorest neighbourhoods, and carefully tailored interventions are delivering community based regeneration that is raising levels of aspiration and achievement. All of the Core Cities, except Leeds, benefit from NDC partnerships testing out new approaches to neighbourhood renewal. Nearly £430 million of NDC expenditure is being allocated to the eight Core Cities over the ten year life of the programme.

All the Core Cities have made improvements in their educational performance since the mid 1990s, most dramatically in Liverpool and Birmingham, where the percentage of pupils gaining more than 5 GCSEs at grades A-C increased by 15 per cent and 14.2 per cent respectively. There remains a way to go before all of the Core Cities reach the rapidly rising national standards, but recent improvements have proved that it is possible to turn around long-standing under-achievement.

There has also been a significant reduction in the proportion of Year 11 pupils completing compulsory education without achieving any GCSEs – down from 13.5 per cent in 1994 to 8.6 per cent in 2002, and the gap between the Core Cities and the national rate has closed from 5.8 to 3.2 percentage points.
There have also been encouraging trends in the reduction of poverty. Between 1996 and 2000 the number of households in the Core Cities in receipt of Income Support or Income Based Job Seekers Allowance fell by 18 per cent – nearly one in five – and totalling 107,000 fewer households. In most cases these reductions have been at a faster rate than in the surrounding regions.

Core Cities overall are also becoming safer. With the exception of Greater Manchester all the Core Cities have experienced marked reductions in the incidence of reported crime in the last few years.
Between 2002 and 2003, police officer strength has risen in all of the English regions in which the core cities are located. Greater Manchester (Manchester), West Yorkshire (Leeds) and Avon and Somerset (Bristol) experienced an increase of more than 4 per cent in officer numbers in the year long period.

Core Cities – Next Steps
The Core Cities have turned a corner and, on most indicators, their performance is improving. Of critical importance, their local economies are generally doing relatively well, the numbers of people in work are growing and their populations are stabilising or growing.

However, although the signs of recovery are clear, few, if any, of our major cities are currently delivering all they could be. Government, together with the Regional Development Agencies and the Core Cities themselves, is determined to work to see that all of our major cities are able to shake off the long years of neglect and under-investment, build on the firm foundations of their recent successes and reach their full potential.

Many of the new partnership programmes are still relatively young, and the full extent of their achievements will only be experienced some time ahead. But the signs of success are clear to see already. In Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield for example, public-private Urban Regeneration Companies (URCs) have been established for four years, and the model has proved so promising that it is being extended to many other towns and cities across the country. With support from the Regional Development Agencies, English Partnerships and their respective local authorities, together with strong private sector leadership, the URCs have been able to bring a focussed approach to areas based regeneration and act as a catalyst for new investment.

The Core Cities are absolutely pivotal to the success or failure of their neighbouring towns and regions. They provide the critical transport, knowledge, media and cultural infrastructure needed for competitive regional economies. Successful regions, not just in this country, but across Europe and beyond, are always supported by successful regional cities. Conversely, unsuccessful cities pull down the fortunes of their surrounding regions. That is why Government and the Regional Development Agencies remain committed to supporting the Core Cities as critical players in our shared objective to secure stronger economic growth in the English regions.
Core Cities also have a key role to play in the emerging plans to develop inter-regional growth strategies to spearhead new ideas for stimulating economic and community prosperity. The three northern Regional Development Agencies are working with Government to produce ideas that can build upon the linkages between the five Core Cities in the north – Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Newcastle – to create a joint inter-regional growth strategy. Similar work is underway in the Midlands, to see how the synergies that exist between the urban conurbations in Birmingham, Nottingham, Leicester and Derby could be better exploited.

A firm trend has been set by Government towards greater devolution and more delegation of powers and responsibilities. Local government is enjoying new freedoms and flexibilities to choose their own investment priorities. This is being supplemented by fresh powers to support Business Improvement Districts and local tax reinvestment of new business rates to encourage more emphasis on economic growth. Our Core Cities stand to gain considerably from these changes to the governance of their localities, and with these new powers will further develop the impressive track record of local city leadership that has emerged in recent years.

Government will continue to support the Core Cities through the joint working group that has been established to share ideas between the cities, the RDAs and a broad spectrum of government departments.

The next steps also include the creation of a European ‘best practice’ network of Core Cities, that will build upon the recent Liverpool John Moores University research into the relative performance of English and European regional cities.

Delivering sustainable communities is a long haul project. It takes time, but it also takes clear and committed leadership, vision, determination and the right set of skills to do the job. That is the message of Sir John Egan’s Skills Review. That too, is the strong message from the Core Cities. In recent years, they have demonstrated the flair and qualities that can bring about lasting success for their communities. The challenge ahead is for others to emulate the example they have set, not just to improve our Core Cities but to benefit all of our communities.
Sources


Further copies of this publication are available from:

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“Our cities are back and the reasons are simple. They remain centres for wealth creation, trade and culture and are cleaner, safer and greener.”

The Right Hon John Prescott, MP, Deputy Prime Minister