

Levelling Up White Paper

Summary for Heritage

February 2022

The UK Government has published its long-awaited [Levelling Up White Paper](#). The White Paper reveals little new, given the recent Budget and Spending Review, but sets out various next steps for Government activity as well as summarising activity across departments related to the Levelling Up agenda.

The White Paper sets out [12 'National Missions'](#) for Levelling Up, which will be given status in law in a flagship Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. The ambition is for each of these 12 'National Missions' to be achieved by 2030.

Aims

Here is our summary of the Missions of most relevance to culture and heritage:

Mission 2 (Research & Development): Increase in domestic public investment in Research & Development outside the Greater South East (“by at least 40% and at least one third over the Spending Review period”).

Mission 3 (Transport): Improved local transport connectivity across the country

Mission 6 (Skills): By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK.

Mission 7 (Life Expectancy): “By 2030, the gap in Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) between local areas where it is highest and lowest will have narrowed, and by 2035 HLE will rise by 5 years”.

Mission 8 (Wellbeing): Improved wellbeing in every area of the UK

Mission 9 (Pride in Place): Rise in people's pride in place ("such as people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community").

These 12 'National Missions' also include ambitions for lower crime rates (Mission 11), a rise in pay, employment and productivity for places across the UK (Mission 1) and nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G/5G coverage (Mission 4).

(See a full list of the 12 Missions [here](#)).

Implementation

The Government is committing to do "whatever it can" to ensure these missions are fulfilled over the next 8 years. In order to achieve this, there is a proposed system for devolution (Mission 12), which will aim to give more power to local leaders, and more mayors for areas across England where this would be desired. There is also an intention to work closely with the devolved governments to achieve UK-wide ambitions.

A new Levelling Up Cabinet Committee, led by Michael Gove, has recently been established. It is tasked with embedding levelling up across central government policy design and delivery. The committee will also work directly with local leaders to improve the clarity, consistency and coordination of policy.

Chapter 3 of the White Paper sets out the Policy Programme for the implementation of these 12 Missions.

As a next step: the Government plans to embark on a process of sustained and systematic engagement and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including devolved administrations, on the White Paper, setting out further detail on a number of these policy commitments in future publications. They will also introduce legislation to Parliament to underpin in statute the changes fundamental to Levelling Up, alongside wider planning measures.

There will be:

- A statutory obligation to report annually on progress towards meeting the Levelling Up missions.
- A Levelling Up Advisory Council.

“It is about the success of the whole country: realising the potential of every place and every person across the UK, building on their unique strengths, spreading opportunities for individuals and businesses, and celebrating every single city, town and village’s culture.” (Executive Summary – xiv)

Key Updates for Culture & Heritage

“Tackling disparities in access to culture and delivering a truly national cultural offer should be a defining feature of levelling up. The UK Government will make changes to transform the landscape for arts, culture and heritage by **significantly increasing cultural investment outside London.**” (p.218)

Heritage is specifically mentioned in the White Paper amongst the three elements in Mission 9 (on increasing people’s pride in place by 2030). These are: a) regeneration, b) communities; and c) culture, heritage and sport.

Throughout the paper, there is a particular focus around *“tackling disparities in access to culture”* and *“spreading opportunity around the country”*. There is a recognition that *“those in less affluent regions are less likely to have visited a heritage site, or to have engaged with the arts, compared to those from more affluent regions.”* (p.217)

The Government has set out an intention *“to explore further collaboration between lottery funders for arts, heritage, sport and community projects within the UK”* and aims to ensure that funding from the National Lottery reaches areas where it is most needed.

The White Paper also cites existing programmes that contribute towards the Government’s vision for *“empowering communities”* and to *“revitalise and champion their heritage buildings, town centres and spaces”* including through the High Streets Heritage Action Zones programme, the Transforming Places through Heritage programme and the Cultural Recovery Fund.

“An **£850m investment** announced at SR21 will support world-class cultural and heritage buildings, including museums, historic sites and public libraries. This will help boost participation, engagement and employment in local communities and on high streets. In turn, this will support the visitor economy in these places, helping to drive regeneration and economic growth, and providing employment for local people.” (p.218)

Following its investment in the British Library’s Boston Spa Renewed project, the Government intends to work with other major national institutions to explore how *“cultural excellence”* can be supported in towns and cities in the North and Midlands. The Government will also look to

see how local leaders can secure further investment from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and other sources.

“We will also ensure that great cultural institutions play their part in spreading access to excellence. As we significantly increase cultural spending outside the capital, **100% of the Arts Council England funding uplift announced at SR21 will be directed outside London**, with support for theatre, museums and galleries, libraries and dance in towns which have been deprived of investment in the past. We will explore how more flagship national cultural institutions can support the strength of our historic cultural heritage in great cities such as Stoke and Manchester.” (xxv – Executive summary)

Upcoming Announcements

It has been confirmed that in the spring, **DCMS will set out further plans to deliver this over the next three years and beyond**. This will include the following changes:

- 100% of the Arts Council England funding uplift announced at SR21 will be directed to places outside London.
- Arts Council England’s key priorities for investing in National Portfolio Organisations from 2023 will be set out, including ACE’s budget to deliver a more even distribution between regions of Grant-in-Aid and Lottery “Good Cause” funding.
- The launch of the 2023-26 ACE National Portfolio funding round, which will provide funding to cultural organisations across England from 2023-26.
- ACE will encourage London-based organisations to establish new long-term offices, venues or partnerships outside London, and giving them practical and financial support to do so.
- Manchester is to become a ‘second home’ for DCMS, opening up almost 400 jobs. The move will allow for closer proximity to the department’s family of ALBs, boosting links to Media City.
- Plans to diversify the boards of cultural organisations in the National Portfolio.
- £40m of successful projects in England as part of the Cultural Investment Fund (with the majority of this being spent outside of London on over 50 projects involving cultural assets, libraries, museums and creative industries).
- Over 100 levelling up priority places will be identified outside of London that will be the focus for additional ACE engagement and investment.
- SR21 also confirmed UK Government investment in the British Library’s Boston Spa Renewed project.

Heritage Alliance Reflection:

Though the White Paper could be more explicit about the role heritage can play Levelling Up, and there is more of an emphasis on arts and culture, it is notable how many images evoking quality of place feature heritage assets.

The work of heritage and cultural organisations can especially support the Government’s ambitions of improving people’s wellbeing (Mission 8) and life expectancy (Mission 7), and increasing people’s pride in place (Mission 9). The impact of people’s engagement with heritage and culture in particular is increasingly well evidenced through recent research – including that outlined in our [Heritage, Health and Wellbeing Report](#) from 2020.

It is also positive to see that the Government’s priorities for other Missions align with specific heritage priorities. The ambition for increased transport connectivity could be beneficial in improving the accessibility of heritage sites across the country by public transport, as would be an increased understanding of the need for skills development and professional training across the sector. It is clear that there will be significant calls on sector expertise through the major infrastructure projects planned.

There is a focus on various types of ‘capital’ in the Paper. Sitting alongside this needs to be a commitment to developing Culture and Heritage Capital (alongside Natural Capital) as part of this agenda. This work would also support the government’s data and information pillar 4.

The [Levelling-Up blogsite](#) associated with our recent Heritage Debate, with contributions from a range of heritage organisations, is worth a read alongside this White Paper Summary.

Funding for Levelling Up and Communities

There is a focus on the delivery of ‘Local Growth Funds’ to support the Levelling Up agenda. These are outlined as:

- *a. the [Levelling Up Fund](#);*
- *b. the [Towns Fund](#); and*
- *c. the [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#).*

Recognising the current funding landscape is complex and “*to deliver a more transparent, simple, and accountable approach*”, the UK Government intends to set out a plan for

streamlining the funding landscape this year. This will include a commitment to help local stakeholders navigate funding opportunities.

“The Levelling Up Fund (LUF) is delivering local priorities that have a visible impact on people and communities across all parts of the UK, including Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland... The fund is investing in **capital infrastructure** that improves everyday life and has a tangible impact on local places. For round one, the fund invested in projects across three themes: regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport and investing in cultural and heritage assets.” (p.238)

A £150m [Community Ownership Fund](#) over the next 4 years is also positive as an outcome for heritage and cultural activities that could be supported through community ownership projects. The next round for the Fund will open in May 2022. The Fund will run until 2024/25 and there will be at least 8 bidding rounds in total.

In terms of providing support to communities, there is much cross-over with investment connected to heritage and culture. The Government aims to support communities in the following ways (page 217):

- Consider how the existing Community Asset Transfer and Asset of Community Value Schemes can be enhanced, and consult on options to go further to support community ownership.
- Pilot a set of Community Covenant approaches: new agreements between councils, public bodies and communities themselves to empower communities to shape the regeneration of their areas and improve public services.
- Provide community investment as part of the £2.6bn **UKSPF**, including new investment opportunities in community-led activity.
- Explore further collaboration between lottery funders for arts, heritage, sport and community projects within the UK to ensure that £1.7bn in **National Lottery funding** every year reaches the people and places that need it most.
- Explore how the existing **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** can be used to support neighbourhood and community activity where Parish Councils do not exist across England and continue the neighbourhood portion of CIL as it introduces a new Infrastructure Levy.
- Consider ways to further develop the role of government in **leveraging private investment** into community and neighbourhood infrastructure, community activity and wealth building.
- As part of its consultation on £880m in Dormant Assets Funding, the Government will consider *“a Community Wealth Fund, financial inclusion and other social investment”* and focus on ensuring that money from the National Lottery reaches those in the most deprived, small areas of the country.

Heritage Alliance Reflection:

It is encouraging to see that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will see a funding increase to £1.5bn a year by 2024-25 (see the new guidance published on the Fund on 2 February 2022).

One of The Heritage Alliance's specific asks from our fiscal and funding manifesto [Backing the Bedrock 2021](#) was that *"The UK Shared Prosperity Fund should be designed as a driver for regeneration - allocating funds to ensure all projects aim to benefit heritage wherever possible"*. We hope the UKSPF will be able to deliver on this, with heritage seen as integral to regeneration.

Other Relevant Areas

Regeneration

"We will also regenerate 20 of our towns and cities by **assembling and remediating brownfield land** and working with the private sector to bring about **transformational developments** combining housing, retail and business in sustainable, walkable, beautiful new neighbourhoods. These new developments amongst others will be supported by an Office for Place which will pioneer design and beauty, promoting better architectural aesthetics to ensure they enhance existing settlements, gladden the eye and lift the heart." (Executive Summary – xxiv)

Government will explore what further measures can make high streets and town centres the thriving hearts of our communities again, including ways to incentivise landlords to fill vacant units. For instance, powers for local authorities to require landlords to rent out long-term vacant properties to prospective tenants, such as local businesses or community groups.

£1.7bn of temporary business rates relief will be provided in 2022-23 for up to 400,000 retail, hospitality and leisure properties to support the high street until the next revaluation. A freeze in the business rates multiplier worth £4.5bn over the next five years has also been announced. The Government is now announcing the next 68 local authorities to receive expert support from the High Streets Task Force, including Southend-on-Sea, Somerset West and Taunton, Rossendale and Dudley. Delivery to these local authorities will be staggered, starting from summer 2022 until the end of the programme in 2024.

Environment

“Ensuring natural beauty is accessible to all will be central to our planning system, with improved Green Belts around towns and cities, supported by Local Nature Recovery Strategies reflected in plan making, and woodland creation supported across the UK.”
(Executive Summary – xxiv)

- The UK Government plans to empower local leaders and communities to reimagine their urban green space and improve access for communities who lack it. This includes enhancing and maintaining protection of the Green Belt. The UK Government will develop plans for: a. further greening the Green Belt in England; b. bringing wildlife back, aimed at increasing public access while simultaneously delivering nature recovery; and c. securing further environmental improvements.
- England Coast Path will be fully walkable by the end of this Parliament. This accompanies a wider rethinking of urban green space, including considering new ownership and management models and locally-determined access targets.
- Alongside the existing £9m UK-wide Levelling Up Parks Fund, a new £30m parks fund will deliver up to £1m to at least 30 local parks in England for refurbishment with an emphasis on facilities for young families.
- Farmers will be supported to protect the environment and enhance access to nature through the Environmental Land Management Schemes, to restore habitats through Local Nature Recovery Strategies and commitment to 10% Biodiversity Net Gain in new development.
- £750m will be invested in this Parliament on tree planting and peatland restoration in England.

Building on this White Paper, the Government will publish a second report on rural proofing in England this spring. This report will set out how government departments are working to support levelling up in rural areas, through targeted approaches where needed.

Net Zero

“The Net Zero transition will have a significant impact on the UK’s economic geography. Emissions per capita are regionally concentrated in the areas that are home to the largest emitting industrial sectors, which include some of the areas of the UK with the lowest productivity. Industrial centres stand to benefit from employment and export opportunities created by the transition to Net Zero. Many are **building on a rich manufacturing and engineering heritage** and opportunities for synergies between different green technologies and industries provide a strong foundation for place-based clusters to develop.” (p.169)

- £3.9bn is being invested to make buildings more energy efficient and move to low carbon heat. This policy aims to support over 240,000 low-carbon jobs by 2035 across the sector.
- £299m R&D settlement for decarbonising transport to trial zero-emissions road freight, invest in maritime emissions reductions in and around major ports and leverage private investment into decarbonised transport schemes across the UK.

Transport connectivity

Some significant infrastructure projects, with implications for commercial archaeological work and the environment are planned.

- Implement the £96bn Integrated Rail Plan, improving the rail network in the North and Midlands; £24bn investment in our busiest roads and motorways; £5.7bn in City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements and £5bn for buses, cycling and walking networks.
- New priority bus lanes in cities and other schemes to improve bus services as part of the National Bus Strategy (including zero-emissions buses and bus priority schemes)
- London-style contactless ticketing across regional rail commuter networks.
- The UK Government is spending over £200m this year and a total of £2bn across the Parliament on improvements for cycling and walking.
- Well maintained local road networks.

Housing and Planning Reform

Housebuilding:

- Building more housing in England, including more genuinely affordable social housing and a new drive on housing quality to make sure homes are fit for the 21st century. £1.8bn investment in brownfield and infrastructure projects announced at SR21 will unlock the delivery of up to 160,000 homes across England.
- The £11.5bn Affordable Homes Programme will deliver up to 180,000 affordable homes with 75% of these delivered outside London, and lever in an additional £38bn in public and private investment in affordable housing.
- A £1.5bn Levelling Up Home Building Fund is being launched, which will provide loans to SMEs and support the UK Government's wider regeneration agenda in areas that are a priority for levelling up.
- Homes England will be refocused to partner with local leaders to unlock barriers and drive forward regeneration.

There are also signals around the forthcoming Planning Bill:

“Improvements to the planning system will help level up left-behind places. The UK Government will enhance compulsory purchase powers to **support town centre**

regeneration; provide further support for **re-using brownfield land** for development; set a more positive approach to employment land in national policy to support the provision of jobs; and increase engagement with infrastructure providers in plan making to bolster productivity. Building on progress to date, wider changes to the planning system will **secure enhanced social and economic outcomes** by fostering beautiful places that people can be proud of; improving democracy and engagement in planning decisions; supporting environmental protection, including support for the transition to Net Zero; and securing clear benefits for neighbourhoods and local people.” (p.228)

R&D and Innovation

There is a focus on, outside the EU, the UK having a competitive advantage in science and technology at the heart of a new economic model.

“A series of new Research and Development (R&D) investments will strengthen our science base across the country... The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) will aim to invest at least 55% of its total domestic R&D funding **outside the Greater South East** by 2024-25.” (Executive Summary – xx)

The UK Government will target £100m of investment in three new Innovation Accelerators - private-public-academic partnerships which will aim to replicate the Stanford-Silicon Valley and MIT-Greater Boston models of clustering research excellence and its direct adoption by allied industries. These pilots will be centred on Greater Manchester, the West Midlands and Glasgow City-Region.

Defra will spend £75m on Net Zero-related R&D in Defra sectors in the next three years, and £140m over three years to scale-up the Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment, in addition to the current Farming Innovation Programme. These will be commissioned through a competitive process to researchers based throughout the UK. It has also announced that up to £24m will be spent on the science and innovation pillar of the UK Seafood Fund.

Education, Skills and Employment

“Through our skills reforms and investment, by 2030, we will aim to have **significantly increased the number of people to have successfully completed high quality skills training in every part of the UK**, including 200,000 more people successfully completing high quality skills training annually in England, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas (Mission Six).” (Executive Summary – xxiii)

- Skills policy will focus on:
 - o 1. Putting local employers at the heart of provision;

- 2. Strengthening locally accessible institutions;
 - 3. Ensuring that all individuals have lifetime access to training;
 - 4. Offering new opportunities to access high quality work and progress in the workplace;
 - 5. Providing employment support for disabled people and people with health conditions.
- A free UK National Academy, a new digital education service, will support pupils from all backgrounds and areas and allow students to acquire additional advanced knowledge and skills.
 - £288m of capital to deliver up to 300 new and refurbished youth facilities, ranging from small modular buildings to flagship youth zone projects, which will be supported by revenue funding to give young people access to support from youth workers, creating over 45,000 extra youth activities per year.
 - Funding a reformed National Citizen Service programme for the next three years, with a year-round offer for thousands of young people.
 - The funding of courses and the governance of colleges will be overhauled in line with employers' needs. Local Skills Improvement Plans, together with supporting funding, will be set up across England to set out the key changes needed in a place to make technical skills training more responsive to skills needs. Nine new Institutes of Technology with strong employer links will be established in England, helping to boost higher technical skills in STEM subjects.
 - Introduce the In-Work Progression offer to help people on low incomes address barriers to better employment opportunities. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will provide £1.3bn over the SR21 period to provide employment support for disabled people and people with health conditions.

Social Prescribing

NHS England is also rolling out social prescribing across the NHS in line with the Long Term Plan commitment to have 1,000 new social prescribing link workers in place by 2020-21, with more to follow, so that at least 900,000 people will be referred to social prescribing by 2023-24. Link workers give people time, focusing on “what matters to me” and taking a holistic approach to people’s health and well-being. They connect people to community groups and statutory services for practical and emotional support.

NHS England has commissioned an evaluation of this rollout, which will help shape and inform future models for social prescribing. There is also £5.77m for a cross-government project aimed at preventing and tackling mental ill health through green social prescribing, which will look at how to increase use and connection to the natural environment.