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CENTRE FOR CITIES AT IPPR

LAUNCH OF *CITIES NORTHWEST*, WITH NWDA: 10 JULY 2006

Background

- This report was commissioned by the Northwest Development Agency, with research input from the Centre for Cities at ippr.
- The report explains the role of the Manchester, Liverpool and Central Lancashire city-regions within the wider Northwest economy. It includes contributions from Richard Leese, Tom Bloxham, Felicity Goodey, Warren Bradley, Sir Peter Hall, Malcolm McVicar and David Taylor.
- The report was launched in Liverpool, with Warren Bradley, Bryan Gray and Dermot Finch.

Warren Bradley – Leader, Liverpool City Council

- Cities have a real opportunity to put forward their case for greater financial autonomy, ahead of the Lyons Inquiry, Local Government White Paper and Comprehensive Spending Review.
- More clarity is needed on the relationship between cities, city-regions and regions – what's best done at what level?
- Strategic decisions in big cities must be *programme-led*, not project-led.

Bryan Gray – Chair, Northwest Development Agency

- NWDA's Regional Economic Strategy takes city-regions very seriously.
- City-regions are major drivers of economic growth in the Northwest: 90% of total output is in the Manchester, Liverpool and Central Lancashire city-regions.
- NWDA is producing five Economic Development Action Plans with city-regions / sub-regions. These will guide RDA spending, support further devolution of decision-making, and encourage greater cross-boundary – all within the framework of the RES.

Dermot Finch – Centre for Cities at ippr

- This publication was NWDA's idea. Thanks to them and to all the contributors.
- *Cities Northwest* explains the role of city-regions in the NW, applies the findings of our *City Leadership* report to the NW, and examines how devolution might work in practice in the NW.
- Regions and city-regions are compatible. City-regions help RDAs deliver their strategies.
- Cities are now embracing the city-region agenda. But there are mixed messages coming out of Whitehall. Ministers need to clarify how they see regions and city-regions working together.

- City-regions need to keep up the pressure for devolution. There's already a risk that Whitehall may not deliver the required scope and pace of change. We cannot just assume that Lyons, Local Government White Paper and CSR will deliver.
- Four key issues for city-regions in the Northwest: 1) financial devolution, 2) transport/connectivity improvements, 3) addressing fragmentation, 4) recognising that different places need different solutions – Greater Manchester needs more radical devolution of power than Cumbria.
- Questions to address:
 - Can city-regions become a reality without institutional paralysis?
 - How do we devolve differently to different places?
 - Should particular governance models such as elected mayors be rewarded with more powers?
 - How can we better define the role of smaller cities and large towns?

Discussion

- Bryan Gray (NWDA): Devolution of powers is not such a big issue. Instead, the region needs greater flexibility within existing governance arrangements. But there is a democratic deficit to address.
- Warren Bradley (LCC): Opposed to a city or city-regional mayor for Liverpool.
- Liam Fogerty (Mayor for Liverpool Campaign): Currently campaigning for a mayoral referendum in Liverpool. An elected mayor for all of Merseyside would be too confusing, but a strong Liverpool mayor would benefit the city-region.
- Patrick White (NWDA): Must not get too hung up on governance structures, but instead use the structures we already have to achieve results.
- Peter Fell (Manchester University): Can city-regions help to answer the West Lothian question, and calls for English devolution? And what do the Conservatives think about the city-regional and mayoral agendas?
- Tom Cannon (Ideopolis International): Northern areas need greater intellectual capacity to make the case for devolution.
- Dermot Finch (Centre for Cities): The Conservatives are very likely to support elected mayors, especially as they offer a route to winning control of English cities.
- Jim Hancock (BBC): Ministerial confusion over English governance and city, city-region issues. The public is confused and alienated. There are still many questions to answer:
 - Will Lyons precede, or follow, the Local Government White Paper?
 - What's the future of the Northern Way?
 - Can elected mayors work outside London?
 - Will we see unitary councils in two-tier areas?
 - What's the future role for councillors?
 - How could neighbourhood devolution work?
- Adam Marshall (Centre for Cities): Economic performance should be the key focus. Cities need to put forward radical and sustained proposals – and give Whitehall the confidence to devolve as much as possible, e.g. regeneration, transport, skills powers. Also, empowering city-regions means getting rid of some existing institutions.
- Alan Harding (SURF): NW cities cannot always look to London for guidance. City-regional mayors are unlikely in the short term. The AGMA model in Manchester, with voluntary collaboration, will work over the next five years – a more radical model could come later.