

Calls for Scottish Government to devolve powers to councils

An appeal is being made to The Scottish Government calling for it to release some of its powers to Scottish local authorities in the same way as the new UK Government plans to do in England.

The Labour minority administration in Edinburgh wants the SNP Government to devolve powers to the council here, and is meeting with Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, this month to discuss how the system works south of the border.

In the King's Speech delivered by His Majesty King Charles III in July there was a one paragraph mention of the proposed devolution of powers to metro mayors and combined authorities in England.

The legislation is intended to create an "ambitious standardised" framework which would accelerate the transfer of powers and now Edinburgh Council Leader, Cammy Day, is keen for the same kind of set up in Scotland.

Cllr Day said: "We've seen the UK Government devolve power, resources and money to joint authorities in England, yet we're not seeing the same kind of approach from The Scottish Government. I think It's time we did see that. We have a new government in the UK announcing more power for the devolved authorities so why can't The Scottish Government devolve powers? The SNP said they would do this in their manifesto

many years ago, but instead they have centralised police, fire and continue to attempt to centralise education. In the area of skills development, for example, that could be developed on a regional basis. Work done through Scottish Enterprise could be better devolved into regional authorities in Scotland.”

The creation of a Local Democracy Act, and the ability for local communities to create regional mayors, was included in the 2024 Labour Manifesto. on which the party won a landslide victory. In Edinburgh the political landscape has changed and there are now four Labour MPs and one Liberal Democrat.

The new Labour Secretary of State for Scotland, The Rt Hon Ian Murray, has been proactive in speaking to local authority leaders since he took up office at the beginning of July.

A UK Government spokesman said: “The Secretary of State has been clear that his priority is to reset relationships, to do things differently. He wants to work with people and organisations across Scotland to make life better for everyone in the UK and across Scotland.”

A Scottish Government spokesperson said: “We are committed to empowering Scotland’s Regions, including by supporting Edinburgh’s Regional Economic Prosperity Framework, as a precursor to similar discussions with all regional economic partnerships across the country.

“Alongside COSLA we are also considering how powers and resources should be shared between national and local government, and with our communities. Examples include proposals for single authority models which would bring more powers closer to local people.”

Mark Griffin MSP, Scottish Labour’s Local Government Spokesperson, said: “Scottish Labour has always been the party of devolution. We believe we need to push power out of Holyrood and into the regions of Scotland to empower communities and support regional economic growth. As well as a

fairer funding formula for local government, Scottish Labour's plans for reform within Scotland include a Local Democracy Act that will allow for the creation of regional mayors and support greater co-operation across regions."

The [Scottish-Labour-Manifesto-2024](#) stated: "Scottish Labour believe we also need to push power out of Holyrood and into the regions of Scotland to empower communities and better support regional economic growth. As well as a fairer funding formula for local government, Scottish Labour's plans for reform within Scotland include a Local Democracy Act that will allow for the creation of regional mayors and support greater co-operation across regions."

ENGLAND

The English legislation is yet to be fleshed out, but the Prime Minister did invite metro mayors to Downing Street in the first few days of his government a month ago and Deputy Prime Minister the Rt Hon Angela Rayner, also addressed The Local Government Association Councillors' Forum in July. She said then that the government will provide stability through long-term integrated funding settlements. Ms Rayner said: ""Our English Devolution Bill will be a touch paper for growth handing local leaders the powers to get growth going, raising living standards and tackle the inequality that's been holding us back for too long. And we know that we can't do that without you.

"Let me be crystal clear. This is not just about empowering mayors. Local government will always have a seat at the table and a voice in our government. Nothing works without strong local government. That's why I will bring you into the heart of my department as a true partnership. The local services that you provide keep our country running. And I know this as a constituency MP."

She continued later in her speech that the "devolution

revolution" is a huge opportunity. She said: "It's time to take back control. With a full reset of the relationship between local and central government, we will make it easier for you to come together and form combined authorities. This means access to new powers over skills, transport, housing, planning and employment support. And this is how together we will deliver growth in every corner of the country and the housing, and the education and the jobs that will go with it."

Newly elected North East Mayor, Kim McGuinness (Labour), said at the time of the State opening of Parliament: "This is an ambitious King's Speech that speaks to the needs of the North East and sets out a plan for handing us more control of our own future – the biggest change we have seen in generations.

"That work to take power out of London and back to the North East starts now, and I'll always push Government to go even further and be even more ambitious. But with measures such as the English Devolution Bill and the Council of Regions and Nations we see a Government dedicated to the reforms we need to grow our North East and create the real opportunity we want to see."

Cllr Louise Gittins Chair of the Local Government Association in England said: "The legislative agenda set out also includes some encouraging signs that the new Government recognises that, with the right powers and flexibilities, councils are critical to help it deliver its missions. For councils to be able to deliver, it is also crucial they have adequate long-term funding and more financial certainty through multi-year settlements.

"The LGA and councils are committed to working closely with the Government on the details of proposals to ensure that together we can address the fundamental long-term challenges facing our communities and help them deliver on their priorities."

Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, Dr Nik Johnson, welcomed the devolution proposals saying that it will “empower metro mayors to unlock growth in their regions, with local growth plans a key enabler of bringing economic benefits for people and communities”.



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