



English Devolution Bill

At a glance

Overview and purpose

The Bill delivers the government's ambition for a "generational project" of determined devolution, enabling more local autonomy and democratic control across England. It aims to:

- Shift power away from Westminster to local leaders.
- Drive economic growth, improve public service delivery, and support community empowerment.
- Provide a standardised legal framework for devolved powers.

Key policy expansions since the white paper

- Expansion of Integrated Settlements to cover 40% of England by 2026–27.
- Establishment of new Strategic Authorities and Foundation Strategic Authorities.
- Commitment to increasing England's devolution coverage to 77% of the population.
- Creation of a £500m trailblazer neighbourhoods initiative.
- Strengthening of local government audit, skills devolution, and neighbourhood governance.

Three pillars of the bill

1. Devolution

- Strategic Authorities are the core structure for devolution, encompassing Combined Authorities,

Combined County Authorities, and in some cases, single councils or the GLA.

- Authorities are categorised as:
 - Foundation (non-mayoral, limited powers)
 - Mayoral (greater powers)
 - Established Mayoral (broadest powers, right to request further devolution)
- A Devolution Framework standardises powers across all Strategic Authorities.

2. Local government reform

- Encourages transition to unitary authority structures to simplify governance.
- Local authority mayors will no longer be newly created; the committee system is abolished.
- Reforms to governance, remuneration, and voting structures ensure consistency and accountability.
- Prohibits MPs from holding Mayoral office ("dual hatting").

3. Communities

- Community Right to Buy strengthens powers for communities to acquire Assets of Community Value.
- Creation of a new class: Sporting Assets of Community Value (e.g. local football grounds).
- Establishes statutory neighbourhood governance across England.
- Bans Upwards Only Rent Reviews in new and renewed commercial leases.

Functional powers granted to strategic authorities

1. Transport

- Become the Local Transport Authority with control over integrated networks, Local Transport Plans, and levies.
- Mayors can manage Key Route Networks, set Traffic Reduction Targets, and apply enforcement powers.
- Authorities will regulate shared micromobility schemes (e.g. e-bikes).

2. Skills and employment

- Transfer of Adult Skills Fund to Strategic Authorities.
- Power to deliver skills provision from pre-entry up to Level 3.
- Strategic discretion with grant funding to meet regional needs.

3. Housing and planning

- Mayors gain London-style powers to call in/refuse strategic planning applications.
- Power to issue Mayoral Development Orders and collect a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).
- Power to designate Mayoral Development Corporations for regeneration.

4. Economic growth

- Legal requirement for Local Growth Plans outlining shared economic priorities.
- Public bodies must “have regard” to these plans.
- Strategic Authorities to collaborate with Local Government Pension Schemes for local investment.

5. Environment and climate

- No new statutory powers yet, but continued exploration of devolving responsibilities.

6. Health and wellbeing

New duty to consider health outcomes and reduce inequalities across all Strategic Authority activity (except the GLA and single councils).

7. Public safety

- Where geographies align, Mayors gain Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) functions.
- Mayors can appoint Deputy Mayors or Public Safety Commissioners for oversight.

8. Mayoral powers of competence

- General power to act like an individual.
- Formal power to convene partners with duties to respond and collaborate.

Greater London Authority (GLA)

- Designated an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority with bespoke arrangements.
- Benefits from the Devolution Framework but with case-by-case adaptations.
- Powers extended to functional bodies (TfL, MOPAC, etc.), including land disposal rights.

Operational reforms

- Remuneration powers introduced for Strategic Authority members and new commissioner roles.
- Budget voting standardised to simple majority (with the Mayor included), except for the GLA.
- New electoral system for Mayors and PCCs: Supplementary Vote replaces First Past the Post.

Future-proofing devolution

- Streamlined process for forming or converting Strategic Authorities.
- Ministerial Powers of Direction allow the Secretary of State to:
 - Mandate new or expanded Strategic Authorities.
 - Accelerate transition to mayoral models.
 - Initiate local government reorganisation if needed.

Summary: What the Bill Achieves

- A legal framework for consistent, deeper devolution across England.
 - Empowers local leaders with strategic, fiscal, and policy-making tools.
 - Rationalises local government structures to improve governance.
 - Anchors community participation, economic development, and public service reform at local levels.
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