



Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

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20th January 2023

Dear Clive,

Thank you for your letter of 6th December 2022 regarding funding and the Spatial Data Unit.

On the funding question, I understand that a similar line of enquiry relating to Levelling Up funding was answered by Jeremy Pocklington on his appearance in front of the select committee on 9th January 2023.

It is important to note that Levelling Up is a whole of government mission. Associated funding, therefore, goes much wider than grants (that are largely capital) distributed by this department, important though they are. The 12 Levelling Up missions range from boosting employment and productivity and investment in R&D, to local transport connectivity and broadband coverage, and this breadth and ambition means that our local growth funds alone, even when considered together, are only one of the levers the government has to deliver on Levelling Up.

From DLUHC alone, a total of £9.9 billion from selected Levelling Up related funds has been allocated across the UK since 2019 (see table below). These include £2.5 billion from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, £3.8 billion from the Levelling Up Fund and £3.2 billion from the Towns Fund and Future High Streets Fund.

DLUHC Fund	Amount since 2019
Levelling Up Fund	£3.8 billion
Towns Fund	£2.35 billion
Future High Streets Fund	£0.83 billion
Shared Prosperity Fund	£2.51 billion
Community Renewal Fund	0.203 billion
Community Ownership Fund	0.017 billion
Freeports	£0.2 billion
Total	£9.9 billion

Across government an extensive funding envelope is contributing to the delivery of the Levelling Up agenda. This includes but is not limited to £40 million from DfE for Education Investment Areas, £2.45 billion from DfT for the Transforming Cities Fund, £125 million from the Home Office for the Safer Streets Fund, and £48 million from DCMS for the Cultural Investment Fund.

In your letter you also asked a series of questions regarding the Spatial Data Unit, please find responses below.

1. When was the Spatial Data Unit created?

The Unit was set up in March 2022 when the Director for the Unit was appointed.

2. What is its formal remit in relation to levelling up?

The Levelling Up White Paper outlines the Unit's remit, setting out that the Unit will drive forward the data transformation required in central government to support the delivery of Levelling Up. Specifically, by transforming the way the UK Government gathers, stores, and manipulates subnational data to underpin transparent and open policy making, and delivery decisions.

The Unit was also given the remit, under the White Paper, to improve the collation and reporting on UK Government spend and outcomes, including building strong capabilities on data visualisation and insights.

3. How many FTE officials now work in the Unit?

As of mid-January, there are 35.8 FTE officials within the Unit, with a small amount of recruitment still ongoing.

4. Are all officials involved from DLUHC, or this a cross-Whitehall unit?

All the members of the Unit are based within DLUHC, and the Unit works closely with colleagues across government.

5. Who is the Director of the Unit?

The Director of the Unit is Tom Smith, who also holds the position of Chief Data Officer for DLUHC.

6. What are the Unit's intended statistical outputs?

The work of the unit is currently primarily focussed on using spatial data to identify and illustrate policy problems and solutions in places to help inform advice to Ministers. For example, the Unit undertook detailed assessments and mapping exercises to inform departmental deep

dives in Blackpool, Grimsby and Blythe. Further analysis was undertaken to inform a Cabinet discussion in Stoke.

Further, the unit is funding the ONS to strengthen subnational statistics which can aid Levelling Up. Examples of statistical outputs from this include publishing local neighbourhood ('Lower Super Output Area', or LSOA) estimates of Gross Value Added (GVA) on 24th January 2023.

The collaboration between ONS and SDU will deliver a wide-ranging set of projects to strengthen published local statistics; and develop and deliver new insights through innovative research. It will also deliver new ways of accessing this data through state-of-the-art visualisations both on the public facing website and through a cross government collaboration on dashboards and tools powered by the ONS led Integrated Data Service. All of this is enhanced through the ONS Local programme - an analytical advisory service - working with local areas across the UK.

In addition, extensive work is currently being done on the sub-national expenditure project and decisions about publication will be made in due course.

7. When will these statistical outputs first be published?

See above.

8. How many meetings have taken place between the Unit and (a) the Office for National Statistics; and (b) the National Audit Office

(a) The SDU works closely with ONS, engaging on a daily basis, and with a formal steering group co-chaired by the Unit and ONS to oversee the collaboration.

(b) The Director of the SDU met National Audit Office (NAO) officials in December 2022 to discuss how the Unit can best support the NAO work with local spatial data.

9. Will its data outputs be "National Statistics"?

The Unit's outputs will include quality assured statistics and management information data and reports. For new statistical outputs, these will initially be labelled as 'Experimental Official Statistics', with assessment under the Code of Practice for Statistics carried out before the unqualified 'Official Statistics' label is applied. In due course we will consider whether the 'National Statistics' designation is appropriate for new statistics and approach the UK Statistics Authority accordingly.

I understand that a meeting has been arranged between the Committee Specialist and the Director of the Spatial Data Unit to discuss this further.

I hope this helps further your understanding of the work of the Spatial Data Unit and its contribution to supporting the Levelling Up agenda. I will be delighted to continue to share the outcomes of their work as it progresses.

Thank you for writing on this important matter.

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dehenna". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DEHENNA DAVISON MP