



# HOUSE OF LORDS

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## Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities

As you will be aware, the House of Lords Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities produced its report (*The future of seaside towns*) on 04 April 2019 (House of Lords Paper 320, Session 2017-19). The Government response was published on 04 June 2019 and the report was debated by the House of Lords on 1 July 2019.

The Committee was a special inquiry select committee and as such ceased to exist on the agreement of its report in 2019. In recent years, the House of Lords Liaison Committee, which is responsible for committee resources, has therefore carried out some follow up work on the recommendations of such special inquiry committee reports.

Accordingly, I am writing to you in my capacity as Chairman of the Liaison Committee to request that you provide a written update on the status of the recommendations of the Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities. The former Chairman of the Committee, Lord Bassam of Brighton, has been consulted on the terms of this letter.

The Committee made 38 conclusions and recommendations to the Government, focused on redressing the inequalities faced by seaside communities and providing solutions for the challenges found in these areas. I would be grateful for an update on the status of each of the Committee's recommendations outlined in the report. In particular, I would be grateful for responses on the points raised below.

### *Coastal Town Strategy*

- The Committee welcomed the Government's acknowledgement that more needs to be done by all stakeholders to bring change to coastal towns. It was the Committee's belief that such change must be top down from central Government as well as bottom up from local communities. Would the Government re-evaluate the progress made by local industrial strategies to ensure that they can be relied upon to form the coherent bedrock of any regeneration strategy?
- The Committee recognised the work of the Government through the Coastal Communities Fund. Can the Government provide details on the five piloted Tourism Zones and what assessment has been made on their efficacy for improving coastal areas? The Committee's report argued that Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) prioritised attention on economically stable areas. Will Tourism Zones and Local Industrial Strategies

be supported by the Government to bring investment to areas of higher risk, such as coastal towns, to provide innovative growth opportunities to deprived areas?

- What details can the Government provide on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the proportion of funding directed towards coastal areas? Will the next Spending Review return the ratio of Crown Estates revenue allocated to the Coastal Community Fund (or equivalent) back to 50% rather than the revised 33%?
- The Committee acknowledged the £39.5m Town Deal provided to Blackpool as part of the wider Towns Fund. The Committee visited areas of severe need, such as Clacton on Sea. When will seaside towns such as Fleetwood, St Austell, South Tyneside and Southend be considered for this funding? Can the Government assure the Committee that it recognises the necessity for growth in the local economy?
- Can the Government detail what the balance is between revenue and capital spend in the Town Deal fund? Can the Government reassure towns that revenue bids are welcome for transformative projects? Has the Government encouraged collaborative Town Deal arrangements to maximise the potential benefits for the sub-regional area?
- How will the Stronger Towns Funding, Future of the High Streets Fund, the Levelling-Up Fund, and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund be coordinated to provide a coherent strategy for tackling coastal deprivation? How centralised is Government control of the town regeneration strategy? How will the use of civil service hubs affect the connection between local and central Government in the coordination of regeneration plans?
- What are the coastal specific plans for 'Tourism Action Zones'? What resources are being channelled to support the growth in home grown tourism? Given the likelihood of predominantly domestic tourism this summer because of the Covid-19 pandemic, how is the Government looking to support seaside towns to respond to this increased demand?
- Has the Government reviewed its decision on cutting VAT on tourism-related activities?

#### *Freeports and Coastal Planning*

- Will the Government commit to removing the barriers which prevent the productive development of land on port sites?
- The Government has indicated that the first Freeport locations are set to be announced in 2021. Can the Government provide greater clarity on the proposed announcement date? Can the Government give greater detail on the decision-making process for allocating Freeports? How are the socio-economic vulnerabilities of port areas incorporated within this process?

#### *Transport*

- Will the Government consider a detailed review of the coastal transport network in areas of greatest need? The Government's response argued that DfT used the Rebalancing Toolkit to steer strategic investment. How does the Government ensure that the areas of greatest need, but also low productivity, are not ignored by spending decisions?
- The Committee recognised the Government's support for over-16s travel affordability policies. Can the Government comment on how this matter is being taken forward, and what progress has been made?
- Will the Government consider the possible benefits to transport connectivity and prosperity in seaside communities of reversing some of the lost rail lines cut after the Beeching Report? This is especially pertinent to Lincolnshire and Cornwall which were particularly disadvantaged by the cuts.
- What progress has been made by the Government in that 2019 election promise to advance a £500m development programme to rebuild rail lines cut after the Beeching

Report? Would the Government consider linking this funding to the 'levelling-up agenda' funds including the Town Deals Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund? Given that the £500m election promise would not be sufficient funding to reverse significant parts of the Beeching Report, how could the Government target funding to either reconnect remote areas by rail or roll out an initial reconnection strategies for coastal communities?

### *Digital Connectivity*

- The Government's digital strategy has shifted since 2019. The strategy first set out to cover the UK with Fibre-to-the-Premises (FTTP) infrastructure by the end of 2025. This was revised to 'gigabit capable' coverage by 2025. However, this was changed again to aim for a 'minimum' of 85% UK coverage by the end of 2025, and as close to 100% as possible thereafter. Can the Government reassure coastal communities that despite their often-remote location, they will not be forgotten by the Government's shifting connectivity objectives?

### *Education and Skills, and Employment*

- The Committee recognised the Government's decision to extend the Opportunity Area programme beyond August 2020. What analysis of the programme is being undertaken by the Government? Will this programme be extended beyond 2021?
- Given the changing nature of learning and the dramatic growth of online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic, how is the Government supporting all children and young adults to access virtual learning opportunities? Is the Government conducting any research into the changing nature of the job market and how education needs to adapt to meet these changes? Would the Government consider interconnecting HE and FE services in coastal areas to improve educational opportunities?
- Will the Government's *Skills for Jobs* White Paper (2021) grant access to HE and FE to geographically marginalised students on the coast? How will the Government overcome the transport and financial barriers that currently prevent students in coastal communities engaging with HE and FE?
- What assessment has the Government carried out of the efficacy of Skills Advisory Panels in their ability to tackle localised challenges in the job market such as: youth unemployment, graduate talent leaving the locality and skill shortages? Has the Government undertaken its review of 'cold spots' in the Institute of Technology programme? What was the outcome of the Level 4 and 5 Higher Level Technical Education review in relation to upskilling individuals from remote seaside areas? Has the Government succeeded in its desire for all places to develop Local Industrial Strategies by spring 2020?
- Has the Government conducted an analysis of the skills drain faced by coastal areas as highly skilled individuals relocate away from these areas?
- The Committee welcomed the Government's pilots to attract teachers to deprived coastal areas. How many teachers have been directly channelled into coastal areas? Have the two initiatives named in the Government's response, specifically reimbursing loan repayments and early career payments, been rolled out across the country?
- The Government's response to the Committee's recommendation of targeted investment in schools was highly dependent on the Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund. This scheme has now closed. What will the Government do to replace the Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund which supported schools in coastal areas? What partnership is the Government pursuing with the organisation Teach First which supplies graduates into teaching opportunities within deprived areas?
- What was the Governments analysis of the Torbay 'Opportunities Through

Apprenticeships' project? What level of uptake did the scheme receive and will similar programmes be projected to other coastal communities?

- The Government did not acknowledge the opportunity that 6-month seasonal employment brings to young people. Can the Government provide details on how training and upskilling can be provided to young people in seasonal employment for the 6-months that they are not in a job?

#### *Housing, Wellbeing and the Built Environment*

- What was the outcome of DWP and MHCLG's meeting to assess the scale and impact of population transience in and out of coastal areas? Did this collaboration include input from DHSC on the steps that Government could take to tackle the disproportionately high levels of people claiming sickness and disability benefits in coastal towns? In June 2019, the Government was undertaking a review into the relative needs and resources of local authorities in England. What actionable recommendations did this review produce and what impact did the review have on baseline funding levels for seaside communities?
- What impact has the Covid-19 crisis had on funding received by coastal local authorities? Will the next budget provide increased funding for coastal towns struggling with a lack of trade and increased demand on local services?
- Will the Government review the local housing allowance rate calculation to ensure that areas of high-density HMOs have accurately reflected local market rents? Will the Government investigate whether tax relief could be provided to private landlords to incentivise improving their rental properties?
- What remit and funding has Homes England been given to tackle the quality of housing in coastal areas? We have been made aware of several Town bids that were unable to secure funding for the housing needs that they face. Can the Government outline the allocation of housing funding within the Town Deals?

I would be grateful if you could provide an update on all these points as well as any additional information relevant to the Committee's report. In agreeing this letter the Liaison Committee has asked me to emphasise the importance of a full and timely response to the important matters raised.

Kind Regards

The Rt Hon the Lord McFall of Alcluith  
Senior Deputy Speaker  
Chair of the Liaison Committee