Scotland and England: local government devolution - lessons and issues

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Summary

• This briefing was originally written for our new Scotland service, but it is also of interest to English councils – particularly leadership and policy teams and members and officers involved with devolution negotiations and bids: it provides an overview of devolution in England, analyses what have been the major issues to date, and looks at collaboration and competition issues for Scottish and English devolution - especially in the North of England.

• Since the General Election 2015 (GE2015), proposals and policies for devolution in England have proceeded apace, and are likely to be further elaborated in the impending Spending Review 2015 (SR2015) in November. Concurrently, the passage of the Scotland Bill 2015-16 through the UK parliament will provide for significant new powers and resources to be devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

• This briefing seeks to describe the 2010-15 'devolution story’ in England, its prospective developments over 2015-20, and potential implications and insights this might provide for Scottish LAs. It also briefly considers the case for further collaboration between English and Scottish LAs to progress shared ambitions and address shared concerns.

• Overall, the paper argues that English LAs now have a very full ‘menu’ of devolution options that they may choose to pursue. However, the outcomes of this pursuit, and indeed the preconditions for enhanced devolution success, remain fragile and problematic.
The Glasgow and Clyde Valley City Deal, and three further recent Scottish city-anchored 'devo-deal' proposals mean that Scottish LAs are now major players in this process. The case for understanding and learning from English experience, and for inter-LA collaboration is strong - both for the four 'deal' areas, and for those outside the deals. The challenge may be mediating and resourcing purposeful and sustained exercises.

Introduction

The UK government is increasingly agreeing 'devo-deals' and governance reforms with consortia of English local authorities (LAs). To London's unique constitutional position, 'deals' have been added with Greater Manchester (November 2014), Cornwall (July 2015), Sheffield City region, North East, and Tees Valley (October 2015). These deals (and any further agreements) have a prospective legislative foundation in the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill. This is currently before the Houses of Parliament and likely to become law in early 2016. They represent a further waypoint on an England 'journey' since 2010 that has included 'localism' policies, city and growth deals, and latterly public services reforms, health and care integration, and fiscal decentralisation.

Scotland's participation in this 'journey' has been sporadic and uneven. The Glasgow and Clyde Valley City Deal (August 2014) was a significant and major extension of the city deal instrument and policies to Scotland and Glasgow.

Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Inverness and Highland City have submitted proposals for devolution deals in September 2015, alongside Cardiff and 34 English consortia.

However, it is not entirely clear what the local and regional 'devolution project' (if any) is in Scotland, nor how and when it will be taken forward. The Scotland Bill 2015-16, reinforcing the constitutional position and enabling further powers to be passed from Westminster to the Scottish Parliament, is awaiting report stage and third reading consideration in Westminster. However, it contains no specific proposals with regards to devolution from the Scottish Parliament to local or intermediate tiers of government in Scotland.

More generally, there are widespread concerns at the marginalisation of Scottish local government in ongoing constitutional debates (see for instance this piece from Centre on Constitutional Change, December 2014), despite recognition of the issue by the Smith Commission. Most recently, even The Economist (17/10/15) devoted a comment piece to the 'soft autocracy' and centralism of the Scottish government.

This briefing, therefore, seeks to provide an overview of some of the major lessons of the England LA devolution story 2010-15. It is intended to assist Scottish LAs' consideration of how to progress their own thinking and proposals. It also briefly considers areas where Scottish LAs may share interests with, particularly, North of England LAs; and areas where Scottish and English LAs may potentially find themselves in competition.
Devolution to LAs and partners in England 2010-15

Previous LGIU briefings provide detailed description and commentary on the extensive policies and initiatives that comprise the England devolution story 2010-15. Key briefings are referenced and linked below.

With hindsight the 2010-15 UK parliament encompassed two overlapping periods for devolution to LAs and intermediate structures in England. The Heseltine 'No stone unturned...' report in 2012 represents a pivot point between the two.

From 2010-12, under an overarching priority of 'reducing the deficit', Government pursued the destruction of (Labour's) 'regions', alongside subsidiary sub-national themes of 'localism', 'rebalancing' and 'big society'.

Local authorities and business leaders were encouraged to establish 'Local Enterprise Partnerships' (LEPs) as voluntary constructs to provide strategic economic leadership of growth. LEPs had no powers and minimal resources - essentially representing a 'big society' approach to local growth.

During 2011, as criticism of government's lack of an approach to economic growth grew, they began to both resource and empower (eventually 39) LEPs, and took a greater interest in cities/city regions.

In July 2011 Greg Clark was appointed Minister of State for Cities (in addition to his Decentralisation remit). In December the Government announced 'new city deals' in its publication 'Unlocking growth in cities (PDF document)'. This offered cities (initially the eight 'core cities' and their hinterlands) a 'deal' of enhanced powers, resources and flexibilities in return for stronger local leadership and decision-making.

Deals with the eight core city regions were agreed by July 2012 and are described in some detail in City deals: implications for enhanced devolution and local economic growth July 2014. They offered the cities (a very 'mixed bag' of) funding (e.g. 'Earnback', Tax Incremental Financing - TIF), skills (e.g. youth contracts, apprentices hubs), business support (e.g. growth hubs), and infrastructure measures (e.g. single pot funds and joint investment programmes). In return, cities undertook to establish Combined Authorities (CAs), LEP-led or other strengthened governance instruments.

This rather ad hoc and piecemeal approach was pulled together in the October 2012 Heseltine report. This suggested a much greater than hitherto decentralisation of powers and resources to LEPs, and strong local governance structures.

Government responded relatively positively - extending the offer of 'city deals' to a further twenty 'cities'/LEP areas, and agreeing establishment of what eventually became a +/-£6bn.p.a. 'single local growth fund' (for LEPs to bid for).
Over 2013-15, the implementation of this approach delivered a further 20 city deals, 39 'local growth deals' (with each of the LEPs), and LEP-based European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF2014-20) programmes. In governance terms the operation of five Combined Authorities (CAs) progressed across five northern 'city regions' - Greater Manchester (GMCA - from 2011), followed in April 2014 by Leeds, Liverpool, North East and Sheffield.

As the 2015 general election (GE2015) approached there was something of a bidding war between the Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats to present their pro-devolution credentials - some of which was represented in government announcements (see below).

This was complicated in England by the aftermath of the September 2014 Scotland referendum where the status of 'England' (as a nation) became prominent in (especially) Conservative policy. Sub-nationally huge challenges centred on actually delivering now 68 'deals' and associated measures; and on making CAs and other local governance instruments work well.

Proposals in England 2015-20

In the months leading up to GE2015, Government appeared to offer a much deeper and broader approach to enhanced devolution than hitherto.

In particular, the Greater Manchester Devolution Agreement, and subsequent GMCA measures, introduced the 'metro-mayor' model for sub-national leadership and governance. It also extended the scope of devolution to health and care integration. The Chancellor then vigorously championed a 'Northern Powerhouse' of the three previous northern regions (anchored by the five core city CAs), and subsequently a 'Midlands Engine' as part of a refreshed 'rebalancing' agenda.

Alongside the 2015 Queen's Speech, Government introduced the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill. This gives effect to the GMCA agreement(s), and also provides an enabling legislative framework for the rest of England (arguably outside London). This framework covers Combined Authorities and other forms of local governance where CAs may not be feasible. It also extends what may be 'in-scope' of any devolution arrangements significantly beyond the local growth remit of previous legislation and 'deals'.
In response to the Bill, and to its reinforcement in the July 2015 Budget, Government invited other areas to make proposals for enhanced local governance and 'devo-deals'. Thirty eight areas - including three in Scotland and Cardiff in Wales - responded to a government September 2015 deadline. 'Deals' have been announced with Cornwall (a single unitary council area), Sheffield, North East and Tees Valley, with an expectation of 5-10 England deals being taken forward on a fast track in the November 25th Spending Review (SR2015) announcements.

Finally, at the Conservative Party Conference, the Chancellor made the 'devolution revolution' announcement that, by 2020, local authorities will be able to retain all business rates revenue collected locally (estimated at £26billion). They will be able to reduce those rates (and collect less). Elected (metro) mayors might be able to raise rates for infrastructure projects with the support of local businesses. Further details on this 'game changer' are, again, expected at SR2015.

By 2020, therefore, England local government and partners are offered an extensive devolution 'menu'. This covers a breadth of functions, forms, geographies and fiscal options. This has been summarised elsewhere by this author in the table below:-

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Purposes</th>
<th>Levels of geography</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Functions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Enhanced local growth and economic rebalancing</td>
<td>• Pan-region - e.g. Northern Powerhouse, Midlands Engine</td>
<td>• 'National' or England-wide statutory bodies (e.g. Transport for North, HS2 development agency etc)</td>
<td>• Local Growth drawn from - strategic planning, transport, skills and employment, business support, and perhaps housing</td>
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<td>• Health and care integration</td>
<td>• Metropolitan city region</td>
<td>• Combined Authority with elected mayor</td>
<td>• NHS and social care services</td>
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<td>• PCC purposes</td>
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<td>• Police and blue light services</td>
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<td>• Reducing public expenditure</td>
<td>• Non-metropolitan city and county regions</td>
<td>• Combined Authority without elected mayor</td>
<td>• Other miscellaneous services where a case can be made - e.g. energy, flood protection, culture, perhaps innovation and higher level skills etc</td>
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<td>• Meeting societal challenges by joining up policy/programmes at level of place</td>
<td>• LEP-based arrangements</td>
<td>• Non-statutory and/or LEP-based arrangements</td>
<td>• Consolidated management and development of the public estate</td>
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<td>• A genuine bottom-up 'devolution on demand' process</td>
<td>• Single LAs (eg Cornwall) or specific places/ (FEAs) functional economic areas</td>
<td>• Local government reform options</td>
<td>• Some limited interest in and scope for enhanced fiscal devolution - with a major proposal for business rates decentralisation</td>
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The complexity of this evolving landscape, and considerations for formulating 'bottom-up' proposals was covered in some detail in the June briefing, 'Enhanced devolution 2015-20 - Building the case'. Alongside this complexity remains the challenge of delivering the 2012-15 'deals', accompanying policies and programmes, and ESIF 2014-20 arrangements.

Major issues of the England experience to date

There is a huge amount that has been learnt from the 2010-15 experience - both conceptual and practical - on enhanced devolution. This learning is relevant to both English LAs at various points on the 'continuum' of the English journey; and for Scottish and other devolved administration (DA) LAs.

At a very practical level:-

• There really does need to be UK leadership and commitment to enhanced devolution in order to make anything substantial happen. There can be little doubt that Eric Pickles' espousal of 'localism' and Greg Clarke's championing of the agendas from 2010; and the Chancellor's more recent interests have been the most significant drivers of progress in England

• There is a fairly consistent consensus about the 'menu' of a local growth devolution package. This was described in English devolution and intermediate tiers of governance December 2014 briefing, as:-

"Metro growth will be delivered more effectively if cities have increasing powers over transport (akin to at least Transport for London-type arrangements) and prioritisation of infrastructure investment (inter alia through joint strategic planning and investment programming). Skills and employment (particularly DWPs Work Programme, SFAs adult and workforce skills) should be led locally. Cities should also be much more influencing (perhaps in some sort of co-design, co-commissioning, 'dual key' processes) of higher education, R&D, innovation, trade and inward investment policies and programmes.

To fund these new powers and influence, cities should agree multi-annual financial settlements with government, ideally in a single city budget/agreement with pooling and co-funding instruments. They should have greater flexibility over borrowing and forward-funding; and some (led by London) may seek devolution of revenue-raising powers (taxes, fees and charges) – starting with place-based property taxes.

Leading these new arrangements requires formal sub-national governance institutions with local accountabilities. Combined Authorities and metro-mayors represent two ‘available’ building blocks. Partners can be brought on board through Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), with a variety of roles and functions for business, HE and other role players (probably short of direct decision-making for public growth funding).
Links to mainstream public services reforms (including health and care, community safety, young people etc) can be aligned through whole place community budget-type agreements (championed by the Public Service Transformation Network), place-based public services boards, LA-led public asset-backed vehicles etc. A major variant of this narrative seeks to apply it either directly or in a modified manner to non-metropolitan city-based and/or two-tier county-regions."

• 'Devo-deals' and governance reforms take a long time to deliver, and 'the devil is in the detail'. Notwithstanding difficult negotiations, the easy bit of the process is the (sound-bite) announcement of the deal. Typically, city deals took between 12-18 months after signing to come into effect. Many of the most innovative measures headlined (e.g. 'Earnback' for GMCA and the similar 'Gainshare' for Cambridge) are either quietly shelved/turned into grant, or come to fruition in a radically different/watered down form.

• There are significant capacity and capability challenges to deal formulation, agreement and delivery - especially in a continuing period of fiscal constraint. These challenges are both central government and local in character. At central government level, it has been well-signposted that government struggles centrally and departmentally to deal with 38 devo-deal proposals. Locally, the time and effort required to agree, promote and deliver local propositions should not be under-estimated.

• There has been little analysis or common understanding of the knock-on consequences of individual deals on the overall policy and financial system - although these are huge. Most recently, for instance, the Chancellor's business rates announcement has preceded any serious analysis of the negative pressures this could put on the 'Northern Powerhouse'. For instance, Westminster's 235,000 population may benefit from collection of £1.8bn business rates p.a. - whilst the five northern core cities local authorities (for 2.6m residents) only currently collect around £1.3bn business rates in total. Throughout the deal making process, top-slicing of central government programmes (e.g. infrastructure, business support etc) for bespoke deals left less to be distributed to non-deal areas.

• Alongside the above points, though, there has been an almost universal acknowledgement of the positive increase in depth and breadth of relationships and mutual awareness that the devolution processes have engendered - both locally and between local and central government.

The policy and conceptual issues raised are more problematic and contested:-

• A 'deal'-based, competitive approach to devolution has been promoted by government as recognising 'one size doesn't fit all', and encouraging innovation in local proposals. At the same time, it is criticised as giving most of the powers (of patronage) to central government; leading to very uneven outcomes on grounds that are difficult to explain/justify 'fairly'. A number of commentators (and opposition parties) have proposed a 'constitutional convention' and/or independent 'devolution commission(s)' to embed legal
POLICY BRIEFING

There remains no consistent clarity to the England devolution 'project' in terms of what it is actually for, and what outcomes it is seeking to achieve. As the options table above illustrates, government has sometimes underpinned its deals with reference to enhanced growth, rebalancing (from London to the north), efficiency savings, and meeting societal challenges (e.g. aging, sustainability etc). It has sometimes prioritised intervention strategies at pan-regional, city region, LEP geography or individual LA levels.

This has led to ambiguities of whether enhanced devolution is principally for cities or for all types of geography; for local growth or public services reform processes - or whether it can be for any and/or all of these.

In practice, these inconsistencies and ambiguities sometimes suggest that either government is 'learning by doing' or 'making it up as it goes along'. There have been false starts (e.g. the 2012 city mayoral referendums), changes of direction (e.g. from city-based to LEP-based growth deals to pan-regional 'powerhouses), and a tendency for 'mission drift - from a small number of cities to potentially everywhere; from local growth to public services reform; from expenditure to fiscal reform. Indeed, the Chancellor has stated, with commendable honesty (with respect to the 'Manchester jewel' of the northern powerhouse): “I’m throwing everything I’ve got at it…. I don’t know if it will work. But I do know that if you don’t even try you’re bound to fail.”

Related to this is the issue of the sustainability of quasi-personal deal-based agreements. What would happen (e.g. to Northern Powerhouse) if Osborne ceased to be Chancellor (or a future PM)? What are the remedies for 'failing' deals or break up of local partnerships (some of which are put together very hastily)? What are the prospects and policy regimes for 'non-deal' areas?

Alongside this, there remains significant scepticism and even opposition to this process from some parts of central government and its agencies. For instance (and this is one of the more considered and positive approaches), the NHS Board's approach to potential health services devolution requires adherence to central NHS policies and standards, and a prescriptive process for business case and geography negotiations before any powers and resources may be shared sub-nationally.

At local level, too, issues for individual local authorities are unresolved. Only GMCA (alongside London) has established any significant capacity and capabilities at intermediate tier level - meaning the other CAs and many other intermediate tier arrangements remain 'shells' into which individual LAs may choose to contribute (or may not!). This dilemma will be tested considerably as and when metro-Mayors are elected. Similarly, the individual deal for Cornwall, raises questions on the circumstances under which a single LA might receive new powers and resources. Individual LA initiatives may become more evident when a devolved business rates regime is incepted.
The post-GE2015 process to date has largely been a conversation between central and local government leaders. There has been lip-service played to the roles and responsibilities of partners (e.g. like business and universities currently only through the LEP Chairperson), and of other councillors (e.g. through overview and scrutiny provisions). There has been little public engagement - particularly around imposition of metro-mayors in the light of their rejection in most cities which held referendums in 2012.

Whilst the above paragraphs cannot claim to be a comprehensive summary, they do highlight some profound issues that need to be considered and assimilated going forward (in England, Scotland and Wales/Northern Ireland). They also highlight a case for significant further (independent) research and analysis on principles, policies and practice of devolution.

Implications for Scottish LAs

As was commented in the introduction, Scotland's devolution 'project' in recent years has been dominated by the independence referendum, and subsequent Smith Commission report and Scotland Bill to devolve further powers to Holyrood.

However, in August 2014, Glasgow joined the Core Cities Group (of England's eight largest cities outside London), and, together with seven other 'Clyde Valley' councils, agreed a major City Deal with Government. These developments potentially put Glasgow towards the centre of devolution debates.

Their City Deal is akin to the menus of larger city (and latterly devo-)deals agreed. It includes a commitment to a £1.13bn infrastructure investment fund, new R&D support for life sciences, SME business support, and measures for tackling unemployment and low wages. The delivery deal is overseen by a Programme Liaison Group comprising the eight LAs' Glasgow and Clyde Valley Cabinet, and nominees of UK and Scottish governments (who are both parties to the agreement).

Following the September independence referendum, the Smith Commission report raised a number of issues on devolution within Scotland, inter-governmental working (UK-wide, Scottish Government, local), parliamentary oversight, and public awareness. Although these resonate with many of the above England devolution 'lessons', they have not been robustly progressed by UK or Scottish governments.

Rather, the UK government has continued with its bespoke deal-based approach. At the March 2015 Budget, government announced it was opening negotiations on city deals with Aberdeen and Inverness (and Cardiff), and was making 2015/16 funding available to Inverness to progress the process.

Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire councils have published their 'city region deal' proposals seeking £2.9 billion from UK and Scottish governments to build on the city region's oil and gas success - to create 39,500 new jobs and £5.1 billion additional...
GVA by 2025. Their statement of intent was submitted alongside the other 37 proposals for the September 4th 2015 deadline.

Details on the Inverness and Highlands City submission suggest a more modest scale of ‘ask’ (+/-£300m) - with initial funding being made available for specific projects - more akin to England's ‘wave two’ city deal and LEP growth deals.

It has also been reported that City of Edinburgh, together with East Lothian, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian Councils submitted +/-£1bn proposals to UK government around the September 4th 2015 deadline.

Were the three new proposals to lead to agreements, together with the existing Glasgow and Clyde Valley deal, around 75% of Scotland's population would be covered by deal-based devolution. This certainly confirms the usefulness of Scottish LAs understanding and deploying insights from England in their own journey.

Based on the section above, key amongst these insights might be:-

1. Arguing for strong and transparent Scottish Government involvement in and commitment to a devolution project with clear goals and criteria for progress

2. Firming up the central-local balances of powers and resources sought across the local growth menu of interventions - infrastructure, skills and employment, business support and innovation, and fiscal decentralisation

3. Ensuring capacity and capabilities are mobilised for lengthy proposition formulation, negotiation and implementation processes - ideally with clear roles, responsibilities and ‘buy-in’ from business and third sector partners

4. Considering policy issues around:-
   a. city, city region, and rural areas;
   b. the cases for intermediate tier leadership and governance beyond individual LAs;
   c. linkages between local growth menus and public services reform
   d. whether elected mayors/metro-mayors have a role in Scotland

5. Embedding devolution strategy within wider financial and fiscal strategies at Scottish Government and local levels

6. Addressing Smith Commission reflections on inter-governmental relations, partner involvement, overview and scrutiny, and public engagement

There are opportunities for progressing this thinking in the coming period - especially for Scottish Cities, with the impending November Cities Convention in Perth, and the ongoing Scottish Cities Alliance work. A key consideration in any read-across from England is whether Scotland needs to go through the evolutionary stages of their
English counterparts, or whether they can learn from England lessons to move more rapidly to a tailored Scottish advanced form of national-local settlement.

Collaboration and competition issues for Scottish and English devolution - especially in the North

As the Scotland Bill proceeds and English constitutional arrangements at Westminster change, one final dimension worth considering for Scottish AND English LAs, is the extent to which Scottish and English LAs are potential allies or adversaries in evolving devolution policies and practice.

At one level, Glasgow's membership of Core Cities Group does suggest a set of common interests with those of the eight English core cities and Cardiff. If the three further city-based proposals in Scotland proceed, it is possible that Scottish membership of Core Cities, or possibly the Key Cities Group could increase.

More broadly, there is always a case for communication and exchange to share intelligence and analysis, expertise and experience, and, perhaps, on occasion to co-present specific policy 'asks' with the critical mass that collaboration provides.

In Scotland, there is the added consideration of how cross-border links will be perceived by the Scottish government, and the circumstances in which these might help or hinder enhanced devolution priorities with Holyrood.

However, especially in local growth policy domains, the major concerns of the 'North', northern city regions, and border areas in England has been of the threat of more favorable Scottish political, economic and/or fiscal environments attracting growth to Scotland. This perspective sees sub-national growth as a zero-sum game, with either Scotland or North of England 'winning' from business and/or government investment location decisions.

A strong and enduring example of this competitive posture has been the perspectives of the North East vis-a-vis Aberdeen City Region in the development of offshore renewables industries and technologies. A second illustration is the concerns of Newcastle Airport and their business community on international connections as air passenger duties and other taxes are devolved to Scotland.

The IPPR North 'Borderlands' report, November 2012, goes into greater detail about these issues. On balance, the report argues that Scotland's fiscal flexibilities may be less extensive than 'feared' - but that policy and economic capabilities and assets are significantly in Scotland's favour. Their principal prescription is for assertive and cohesive Northern leadership team(s) lobbying for enhanced devolution powers and resources more akin to any Scotland settlement. A follow up 2013 report (with Durham University), specifically for the North East and Cumbria, outlined
There are gaps, however, between work on the impact of Scottish government 'national' economic policies on a variably-defined 'north', and the more granular and nuanced agendas of specific Scottish and Northern LAs, CAs, or even Northern Powerhouse leadership team(s).

The case for dialogue to find win-win solutions for shared issues is strong. These issues might range from strategic overarching devolution policy, to specific concerns with some national agencies, transport corridor connectivity, even to industrial supply chains or R&D. Beyond Glasgow's membership of Core Cities Group, however, there are questions of how cross-border collaboration could be identified, mediated and resourced (on anything beyond an ad hoc basis).

Comment

Hopefully the narrative above articulates the complex, inconsistent, messy and sometimes even chaotic character of the England devolution story since 2010. The English journey remains a huge distance from a new sustainable equilibrium in national-local constitutional and policy relations. The destinations of that journey, and its outcomes, are far from assured. Indeed, it is entirely possible that English LAs could learn a lot from their Scottish LA counterparts' experience of dealing with the Scottish Government in Holyrood.

Perhaps the most important lesson for Scottish LAs are the apparent preconditions for GMCAs 'success' in being hailed as the 'gold standard' of England devolution.

Greater Manchester has collaborated on a city region basis - led by the ten LAs - since the abolition of the metropolitan county in the mid-1980s. They represent a relatively coherent functional economic geography with significant alignment and co-terminosity of administrative boundaries. They have had some stability of long-term leadership who have formed, stormed and normed a 'vision' and directions for the city region with partners. The team and relations have endured through major setbacks (from the IRA bomb to the congestion charge vote).

These preconditions have enabled GMCA to pragmatically adapt to, tailor, and take advantage of Government devolution initiatives. If Government wants a business-led leadership team (LEP), Greater Manchester will adapt their business or economic forum. If they want a CA, they can evolve their LA Association. If they want a metro-mayor, they are able to agree a proposal....

Scottish (and English and Welsh) LAs should probably put more effort into building the preconditions for successful local and intermediate tier leadership - and less into scrambling to submit bids for the latest Government sound-bite in a shallow and contrived partnership (although these will sometimes be necessary and important).
Concluding remarks

This briefing is unusual. It is produced by an author involved in local growth-led devolution in England, principally for a Scottish LA readership. In this respect, there is recognition and humility of the limited extent of knowledge and understanding of Scottish LAs and Scottish Government context that underpins the narrative.

As a relatively well-informed outsider looking-in, greater understanding and analysis of England devolution experience 2010-15 seems of some use to Scottish LAs. This will be relevant as they consider their challenges over 2015-20 - especially as the Scotland Bill 2015-16 becomes an Act, and accompanying changes are incepted.

This briefing seeks to provide an introduction to that process, and also to enthuse English LAs - especially in the North - to become part of that collaborative learning.

Related briefings

Health and social care devolution: A commentary October 2015

Dealing with devolution - update September 2015

Devolution: a road-map June 2015

Enhanced devolution 2015-20 - Building the case June 2015

English devolution and intermediate tiers of governance December 2014

Emerging models for leadership and governance of local economic development June 2014

City deals: implications for enhanced devolution and local economic growth July 2012

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