

Proposals for a Lancashire Combined Authority Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a Combined Authority?

A Combined Authority is a statutory body created to lead collaboration between Councils on transport, regeneration and economic development. Effectively, a Combined Authority is a new statutory authority. It takes the unanimous agreement of the constituent (member) authorities and an order by the Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government to establish the Combined Authority.

A Combined Authority is not the same as a merger or take-over of councils or a Unitary Council. Whilst individual councils would continue to exist, and retain their individual powers, they would simply work more closely together in a more structured way.

2. Why is a Combined Authority necessary?

To support and enhance our efforts to boost the economy, create jobs and improve transport and planning. Although our councils already work together well, a Combined Authority could reduce duplication and enable clearer co-ordination and strategic decision-making. This will help to drive forward transport, economic development and skills, giving us a stronger voice in discussions with the Government, neighbouring areas and developers. Other places across the country are setting up combined authorities and negotiating deals with Government so Lancashire councils want the opportunity to receive the same benefits.

3. When can one be created?

A Combined Authority can be created when two or more neighbouring councils, at least two of which are transport authorities, covering a natural economic footprint want to collaborate more closely to improve economic outcomes for that area. There is no set timetable; it is for groups of councils to come forward with proposals to be considered by Government once they have established that the Combined Authority would be beneficial for their area.

4. How is a Combined Authority created?

Councils wishing to participate in a Combined Authority must complete a statutory governance review of current governance arrangements and options following which a scheme outlining their proposals is produced. Following consultation this is submitted to Government.

Under current legislation, the Secretary of State must then consult, including with the councils that would be covered by the Combined Authority, and must be satisfied that the establishment of a Combined Authority would bring about the following results:-

- Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of transport in the area;
- Improve the exercise of statutory functions relating to economic development, regeneration and transport in the area;

- Improve the economic conditions in the area.

5. *What are its responsibilities?*

A Combined Authority can take on the economic development and regeneration role of its constituent Councils, either in full or concurrently. A Combined Authority can also take on the roles of a Local Transport Authority.

Increasingly, established Combined Authorities are also making agreements with Central Government for functions, powers and funding to be devolved to them so that they have a greater ability for example to drive economic growth, job creation and to take more responsibility for local issues. These agreements are commonly referred to as Devolution Deals.

6. *What are the legislative requirements to set up a Combined Authority?*

Under existing legislation, a council can only be a constituent (full/voting) member of one Combined Authority (although it is possible for a Council to have Associate (non-voting) membership of another Combined Authority). Currently, councils in a Combined Authority must be contiguous. However, if the Cities and Devolution Bill which is currently being considered by Parliament is made law in its current form, it will allow non-contiguous councils to participate in a Combined Authority where it is practical to do so.

7. *What are the powers of a Combined Authority?*

This depends on the powers attributed to it by the constituent councils and those which are agreed (and potentially devolved) by the Secretary of State. A Combined Authority is a legal body separate from its constituent councils and can become responsible for delivering, amongst other things, an integrated transport network, the economic development and regeneration of the area it covers, delivery of investment in housing and coordinating improvements in skills. It can raise a levy and borrow money for transport purposes.

8. *How long might it take to create a Combined Authority?*

Once a decision by participating councils to create a Combined Authority, much depends on the legislative process. Greater Manchester was the first Combined Authority under the new powers with a further four Combined Authorities created on 1 April 2014. From formal Council decisions to create the Combined Authority, Liverpool took 11 months whereas Sheffield took 24 months. That said, all of the Combined Authorities has pre-existing arrangements such as City Regions and Integrated Transport Authorities to build upon.

9. *What are the potential benefits of creating a Combined Authority?*

Creating a Combined Authority means that councils in Lancashire can work as one democratically accountable body around key issues. This could help:-

- Avoid duplication leading to more efficient services;
- Create a stronger basis for bidding to Government and the EU for more funding
- Make better use of council and Government funding
- Speed up decision making on strategic issues

A Combined Authority would be a transparent and open decision making body that would act in the interests of Lancashire to attract investment into the area.

10. What are the specific objectives of the proposed Lancashire Combined Authority?

The key objectives of the Lancashire Combined Authority are currently proposed as, to ensure:

- A **Prosperous Lancashire** that's recognised as a destination of choice, to do business in, live or visit, building upon the work of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership to deliver a Lancashire where residents and businesses alike can benefit from this rising prosperity;
- A **Connected Lancashire** with digital and transport connectivity across the county and to neighbouring areas. Lancashire needs the ability and the flexibility to make policy and investment decisions on digital and transport connectivity which are calibrated to address local in a bespoke way;
- A **Skilled Lancashire** which can meet the demands of employers and future business growth, supporting employment opportunities for residents;
- **Better Homes for Lancashire** where residents have better living standards with good quality homes and a wide housing offer. To do this we need homes and housing land supply that meet the needs of market demand and provides developers and buyers with confidence in the housing market;
- **Public Services Working Together** with integrated public services at the heart of local communities, with a focus on giving everyone the opportunity for a healthier life.

11. Is a Combined Authority different to a devolution deal?

Yes. The Government is encouraging local areas to take more responsibility for local issues and is willing to devolve powers and funding for this purpose. Greater Manchester, which is spearheading the so called 'Northern Powerhouse' is an example of where this has happened. The creation of a Combined Authority is the first step for areas wanting to agree a devolution deal with the government.