



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Ms Ruth Miller  
Department for Communities and Local  
Government  
Zone 3/J1 Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU

Your Ref:

Our Ref: AWH/DCLG  
Combined Authority consultation

Date: 18 December 2013

Dear Ms Miller

**Response to proposal to establish a combined authority for the area of Durham, Northumberland, and Tyne & Wear**

Thank you for giving English Heritage in the north east the opportunity to comment on the above consultation document. We are pleased to do so.

From the documentation it is clear that the combined authority's responsibilities are to be relatively narrowly proscribed. In consequence, English Heritage in the north east can see little in the proposal that would impact significantly upon its statutory role and remit. However, the following issues are one's on which further clarity would be helpful.

1. Is it the case that all or any permitted development rights conferred on the ITA will transfer to the new authority?
2. Will any responsibility for and control over works affecting heritage assets that might need consent remain with the constituent local planning authorities?
3. In terms of economic development and regeneration functions, to what extent, if any, would the combined authority have control over the spatial distribution of economic development and land use - functions which would normally be the responsibility of the constituent Local Planning Authorities through the statutory Development Plan process?
4. What would be the implications for individual planning authorities in terms of drawing up their own Infrastructure Delivery Plans as the mechanism by which their Development Plans would be achieved?
5. In its ability to raise a levy for works undertaken, what would be the implications for the constituent authorities in drawing up their charging policies for any Community Infrastructure Levy, especially given that the intention to raise funding this way is not likely to be consistent across the combined authority area?

I should also like to take this opportunity to draw attention to some headline issues that I feel are pertinent to any future combined authority and its areas of responsibility.

As you will be aware the North East's heritage is both an important driver of economic growth in its own right and at the same time provides a backdrop against which many regeneration and economic development programmes take place. Some of the ways in which heritage makes a contribution are set out below:

- **A catalyst for growth** – businesses based in listed buildings make an estimated annual contribution to UK GDP of £47bn and employ some 1.4m people. Further, there is growing evidence of a strong correlation between the use of listed buildings and key growth sectors in the economy, including SMEs, entrepreneurs, independent businesses and creative industry start-ups. Examples include the conversion of the grade II former Cooper's Motor Mart, Westgate Road, Newcastle to Cooper's Studios which now holds a range of SME businesses.
- **Tourism** – heritage tourism is worth £26.4bn to the UK economy and employs over 740,000 people. Heritage is a key factor in overseas visitors deciding to come to this country, and new research from VisitBritain has also demonstrated how the tourism sector will continue to grow over the medium term, outstripping many other sectors. As highlighted by the Adonis Report this is particularly important for the North East.
- **Regeneration and economic growth** – investment in historic places and buildings generates returns, and research tells us it helps attract people, businesses and associated spending across a variety of locations. It also helps create sense of place and retain social capital. Example includes Berwick, where there has been a long term commitment and action by English Heritage and others in respect of the town's important historic environment.
- **Rural development** – our heritage is one of the building blocks of local distinctiveness and character, and which contributes to the high quality landscapes which are a driver for tourism. The maintenance, conservation, repair and re-use of redundant traditional farm buildings in particular can provide a springboard for rural business diversification, either as part of existing farm businesses, or more widely within communities.
- **Repair and maintenance of existing buildings** – over 85% of existing buildings will still be in use in 2050. Repair and maintenance of the existing building stock (of which pre-1919 buildings make up almost a fifth) creates 55% more output than similar investment in new housing
- **High Street and town centre regeneration** – successful town centre management and retail development schemes that take their cue from their surrounding historic character, such as Grainger Town in Newcastle, go a long way to conferring distinctiveness and competitive advantage over neighbouring centres.
- **Skills and training** – the North East heritage sector plays an important role in providing opportunities for learning and developing technical and traditional skills. This is achieved through volunteers, apprenticeships and vocational qualifications and employment opportunities. Examples include the Heritage Skills Initiative which was initiated by the North East Historic Environment Forum (NEHEF) and hosted by the North of England Civic Trust. Between 2007 and 2012 this Initiative has provided 119,000 hours of training and engaged over 18,000 people with much needed traditional heritage skills and technical conservation.

English Heritage, through our statutory role in the planning system and our multidisciplinary teams has extensive expertise on all of the above issues. We in the North East office have

long standing experience of working with colleagues in local authorities and the development sector in helping to 'unlock' major and small projects, so ensuring that new developments successfully integrate heritage assets in a constructive way in order to help create and maintain sustainable growth.

With the above in mind we would seek to ensure that the importance and contribution of the historic environment to the economic recovery of the North East is recognised and reflected in the work of the combined authority as it moves forward. If further advice on how this can be achieved is required I or my colleagues are more than happy to discuss matters with the constituent members of the new body.

Yours sincerely

**Alan Hunter**

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