

County Deal Opportunities for Fylde

Lancashire has been working for some time to establish a formal platform to engage with central government on a Lancashire wide footprint. Whilst Lancashire leaders have always met on a regular basis to address opportunities where wider regional working or shared resources are required, the 'Lancashire Leaders' as a decision-making entity has no constitutional or legal foundation on which to act. Over recent years there has been the emergence of Combined Authorities and other constituted arrangements in response to regional engagement with central government to secure freedoms, flexibilities, and grant funding opportunities under the devolution agenda. Without a formal legally constituted regional body it has not been possible for Lancashire to benefit from the devolution of central government powers, and it will remain unable to access additional regional support initiatives around infrastructure, health, economy, skills as long as there is no accountable body in place.

It is important that Lancashire establishes a framework to access the benefit from the devolution of powers on a regional footprint, gaining support for initiatives that impact all of Lancashire and which have been agreed in the Greater Lancashire Plan. Without this Lancashire is missing opportunities through devolution and in turn Fylde is missing out on opportunities; what helps Lancashire in terms of infrastructure, health, skills, and the economy also helps Fylde.

The Greater Lancashire Plan incorporates all the strategic regional issues that every local authority in Lancashire will benefit from addressing. The plan identifies the Lancashire specific issues in health, economy, environment, and skills. The thematic areas that Lancashire Leaders have always come together to work collaboratively on, which are articulated at present in a Greater Lancashire Plan, will serve as the primary evidence base from which Lancashire will draw the 'asks' under devolved government through the County Deal. The goal is a bespoke County Deal for Lancashire which will secure the devolution of real powers from Whitehall.

The option of a Combined Authority for Lancashire has been explored in detail but was not deemed to be appropriate for Lancashire, another option for a county with districts and unitary authorities is a County Deal. Lancashire (and Fylde) needs a bold and ambitious deal that will give Lancashire new powers to make significant decisions about the future in major regional strategic initiatives.

The papers presented in the report to this appendix outline the content and process of a County Deal. Included below are some of the opportunities that could be realised for both Fylde and Lancashire through a County Deal:

- Unify a single, influential voice for Lancashire as a regional body
- Enable collective decisions on matters affecting the whole of Lancashire
- Increase the powers, resource and capacity to deliver on Lancashire's goals
- Regional decisions are made closer to the Lancashire people affected and would be shaped by sub-regional priorities rather than at central government level
- Work together to encourage investment, business and job creation in the Lancashire economy, driving up earnings and outcomes for residents & businesses

- Strengthen transport links between and within Lancashire communities, connecting local economies
- Tackle inequalities to realise Lancashire's people and place potential
- Member councils can be more ambitious in their joint working through a locally driven structure based on collaboration that considers the interests of all authorities on key issues
- Take advantage of powers and resources devolved to them from national government such as to tackle inequalities, challenges and deliver the ambition and opportunities captured in the emerging Greater Lancashire Plan
- Create the full-time capacity to focus on delivering those sub-regional priorities

The Potential Opportunities for Fylde

Whilst it is recognised that Fylde will benefit from the generic devolution 'asks' through a County Deal there are several Fylde specific opportunities that will benefit from regional working and the resources possible through a County Deal.

Transport, connectivity, and infrastructure:

East / West connectivity is important for the Fylde on a regional footprint (Junction 2 M55 and A585 plans) as well as North / South connectivity on the Fylde coast (Link Road, quality of highway infrastructure, and passing loop in the South Fylde line).

The coastal infrastructure for cycling needs to be improved. The coastal locations are important for the wider hinterland of Lancashire and the North West and need to be easily accessible destinations for health, leisure, and wellbeing.

The only two runways in Lancashire are on the Fylde coast offering regional benefit, both linked to Enterprise Zones aimed at skilled employment. Within Lancashire this is a Fylde coast unique selling point to attract support for development and growth.

The consistency of broadband in terms of speed, access and reliability is a challenge across the region. Fylde has particular issues with the quality of broadband offer in the rural hinterland as well as poor service in some coastal and urban spots. Through a regional county wide strategic approach it will be possible to access the necessary skill, resource and technology through major national providers that can deliver broadband infrastructure that is high quality and consistent across Fylde. This is a major infrastructure initiative that requires economies of scale a County Deal approach can offer to remove the current inequality of provision that removes opportunity from many residents because of poor or no superfast broadband provision.

Economic growth and investment:

The Clean Energy Technology Park is an important regional asset, the nuclear licence regime gives it national and international advantage; the benefits this could bring are potentially immense for the whole of Lancashire.

Activity at sea and on the coast (energy, leisure, minerals, tourism etc.) by Preston, Fylde, Blackpool, Wyre, and Lancaster is an important Lancashire-wide health, wellbeing, and economic factor. The coast and ocean are a Lancashire asset with scope for a co-ordinated approach to achieving benefit whilst protecting the coastal / sea environment.

Town Centre regeneration is a priority for Fylde the resources required to deliver large scale project for both economic and public realm schemes are significant. Additional funding opportunities will be available through regional bids including transport infrastructure essential to town centre regeneration. A County Deal will prevent greater opportunity to access skill, knowledge and resource that can support town centre regeneration and link town centre economies across Fylde and Lancashire.

Early years, education, adult skills and employment:

Fylde has a specific need for Post 16 provision that would require wider regional and sub-regional co-operation to address.

Employment sites (Westinghouse, ES1, Wyndyke, Warton EZ) in Fylde must be fully exploited to maximise the positive economic and social impact on wider Fylde and Lancashire. Better collaboration and joined-up decision making between agencies / services reporting to a single body for a single site (i.e. transport/broadband/waste water/health/leisure/education/highways) makes for more efficient and effective decision making and speeds up progress.

Environment, climate change and housing quality:

Surface water management requires wider co-operation to understand the regional factors that impact on flooding, water doesn't recognise local authority boundaries, and solutions need to be joined-up across a range of stakeholders led through a County Deal framework.

Collaboration over waste collection and disposal split between authorities would achieve a consistent approach to more streamlined efficient service and joint solution to future waste management issues and costs.

Carbon neutral initiative on fleet provision and the necessary infrastructure for electric and / or hydrogen vehicles, the cost and resource requirement to deliver the outcomes effectively and within a reasonable timeframe require regional co-operation.

Climate goals are not achievable in silo and collaboration with our neighbouring authorities is needed to deliver on the practical infrastructure (public-access electric vehicle charging points, energy efficiencies in homes and commercial properties, etc.) required to meet our objectives.