

## **Partnerships for People and Place: Guidance for Local Expressions of Interest**

Government has published (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/partnerships-for-people-and-place/partnerships-for-people-and-place-guidance-for-local-expressions-of-interest>) guidance (July 12<sup>th</sup> 2021) for expressions of interest for 'Partnerships for People and Place'.

The idea is to develop outcome based methodologies between joined up activity in local and national government departments focused on particular 'places'. This also includes 'local partners' and would be whittled down from a long list of 34 local authorities (of which Cornwall was one) to 15 in 'England'.

The idea is to 'test innovative and collaborative approaches' to support the 'levelling up' agenda, which aims to ensure that no community is left behind, and 'empowering' local communities to develop and deliver solutions to the problems that matter to them. The project in successful areas will run until 2023.

Comment: It appears that the Devolution White Paper has been dropped in favour of the 'levelling up' agenda. The White Paper could have been good news for Cornwall as it already had unique devolution recognition in Whitehall (of some powers and functions; but not fiscally) and has operated as a functional economic area which has included the impetus from its cultural identity.

On the other hand; there are long standing rumblings about the 'patchwork quilt' of devolution settlements across the country leading to inequity and those that persist (such as the 'Great South West') in arguing that in order to move forward the 'south west' (including Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly) needs to be part of a larger region akin to the Midlands Engine or Northern Powerhouse.

Whatever the argument, 'Levelling up' is largely more amorphous and difficult to achieve. Cornwall is facing a confluence of huge issues: a housing crisis, over tourism, health pressures, climate change and population growth; all feeding off one another.

Partnerships for People and Place is about process and learning and is only supported by between £150,000 and £350,000 per area.

However, Cornwall Council and others have made much of the need for an outcome focused approach. Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly are in the situation where although GDP and the number of jobs has nominally gone up under EU and other match funding; there are still issues of under employment, low wages and of course lack of access to housing. Despite the 'lifestyle' marketing which is assisting Covid flight from the cities, Cornwall has one of the highest rates of anti-depressant prescribing in the UK.

'Outcomes' - then – are not great. Hundreds of thousands of people have received free or subsidised training courtesy of the European Social Fund (ESF) but there is no way of knowing whether this has led to pay rises or progression.

So, outcomes are important. But this is also about leadership across the public, private and community and voluntary sectors across Cornwall (together with dedicated human resource drawn from Government) but desired 'innovation' (from the guidance) can only come from the involvement of people sharing their lived experience and having a stake in development of the 'solutions'.