

Heart of the South West

Heart of the South West Frequently Asked Questions – November 2015

What is devolution?

[Devolution](#) is the redistribution of power and funding from national Government to local authorities. The Chancellor of the Exchequer wants devolution to deliver improved productivity, a more skilled workforce, more housing and reduced, overall, public sector costs and is asking for bids to be submitted.

How have we responded to this?

The Government is keen for devolution to happen within Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) boundaries, and ours is the Heart of the South West (HotSW) covering Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay. There are 20 partners:

- Heart of the South West LEP.
- Devon County Council.
- Somerset County Council.
- Devon's district and borough councils – East Devon, Mid Devon, North Devon, South Hams, Teignbridge, Torridge and West Devon.
- Somerset's district and borough councils – Mendip, Sedgemoor, South Somerset, Taunton Deane and West Somerset.
- Plymouth City Council.
- Exeter City Council.
- Torbay Council.
- Exmoor National Park.
- Dartmoor National Park.

In September 2015, the partners submitted a HotSW [Statement of Intent](#) to Government, signalling our wish to open up negotiations for a devolution deal for the HotSW area.

What powers do we want to see devolved?

The Statement of Intent sets out our desire for additional powers and responsibilities in three areas:

- Economic growth and productivity.
- Health, social care and wellbeing.
- Infrastructure and local resilience.

These are the areas we want to be the focus of our discussions with Government as we look in detail at what could make the biggest difference to

us and bring the most benefits to communities. More detailed discussions need to take place before we can talk about specific powers.

Equally, if we can do something without having any devolved powers, we will just get on and do it and it won't form part of our negotiations with Government.

What benefits will we see?

A single voice from 20 different organisations across Devon and Somerset is a very powerful voice. Decision making, controlled and delivered locally, will help us to build on our achievements so far and lead to economic growth, savings and efficiencies, a more, resilient and connected area, and increased productivity.

How much is it costing to make this deal for devolved powers?

The only cost envisaged is the cost of officer time which is being shared between the various organisations.

Would devolution save money?

One of the objectives of the deal is to make the public sector more efficient and save money. Ideally, with less bureaucracy and layers of decision making, devolution will reduce costs. The Government expects devolution deals to be fiscally neutral – it does not want to spend any more money than it already spends. But our communities should benefit from economies of scale, delivering better outcomes.

What happens now?

A Programme Office led by Cllr John Osman (Leader, Somerset County Council) and Tracey Lee (Chief executive, Plymouth City Council) has been set up to co-ordinate our HotSW devolution bid, which will be submitted to Government on 18 December 2015.

Theme leads comprising of Leaders and Chief Executives have been identified to work on the detail of the bid, which will be considered by all partners decision making processes before sign off.

When will we know the outcome of the bid?

Following formal submission of the devolution bid, we will enter a period of challenge and negotiation with Government. We expect to hear in March 2016 if the bid has been successful.