

Theme:

If the Levelling Up White Paper is to succeed, it needs to account for the challenges of local government.

Area of Focus:

The government is keen to 'build back better' but to do that, the Levelling Up White Paper needs to manage the complicated regional geography and institutions in order to make a difference. This links to an earlier piece of Midlands Engine commissioned work, available [here](#).

Key Findings:

- The challenges are:
 - The greater need for coordination and collaboration at the sub-national and sub-regional scale
 - The often inadequate institutional capabilities and resources available to develop strategies and economies
 - The need to economic development bodies to be placed on a consistent statutory footing with proper power and resources
- The current mix of statutory and non-statutory bodies and layers of governance make it difficult to align sub-national and national policies
- Ad hoc challenge funding makes long-term planning and geographical coordination difficult, and can homogenise local strategies and programmes
- COVID-19 has led to more partnerships or a revitalisation of existing partnerships
- Recovery frameworks include a broader vision including health, well-being, inclusive growth, digital infrastructure, green issues, skill, innovation, and enterprise



Midlands Engine Impact:

- There is a need for greater consistency across local and sub-regional strategies. They should not be the same, but common characteristics, including a targetry framework and a set of indicators to monitor progress.
- Greater institutional capacity is needed across the region to create long-term strategies and undertake economic planning
- Funding must move away from 'challenge funds' to a system that promotes coordination and collaboration at the sun-national scale. This is particularly relevant to the Midlands where many local bodies are already working together.
- The formular based long-term regional funding allocations based on need should return with devolved responsibility for the management of these funds to the appropriate statutory body. This would see some Midlands areas get more funding.



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