

Combined Authorities and the Rural Lens: establishing the North East Coastal and Rural Taskforce

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Rural Footprint of Combined Authorities

- 77% England population soon to be covered by Devolved arrangements
- Devolution Bill looking to 'complete the map' - devolution by default
- Rural areas significant - more than a residual

Mayoral Combined Authorities	Population	Rural Population	% Rural
York and North Yorkshire MCA	818,312.00	346,813.64	42.38
Greater Lincolnshire MCCA	1,095,014.00	450,303.27	41.12
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough MCA	894,519.00	300,969.91	33.65
Hull and East Yorkshire MCA	609,229.00	149,205.74	24.49
East Midlands MCCA	2,204,451.00	449,135.66	20.37
North East CA MCA	1,969,826.00	398,738.88	20.24
Tees Valley MCA	677,189.00	71,561.65	10.57
West Yorkshire MCA	2,351,583.00	244,902.39	10.41
South Yorkshire MCA	1,375,006.00	113,921.05	8.29
West of England MCA	956,298.00	78,849.88	8.25
Liverpool City Region MCA	1,551,765.00	15,834.74	1.02
West Midlands MCA	2,919,653.00	27,356.05	0.94
Great Manchester MCA	2,867,762.00	26,535.73	0.93
Devolution Priority Programme			
Cheshire and Warrington	966,896.00	181,353.12	18.76
Greater Essex	1,860,208.00	384,711.45	20.68
Hampshire and the Solent	1,998,281.00	333,288.28	16.68
Norfolk & Suffolk	1,676,808.00	750,687.88	44.77
Sussex and Brighton	1,705,625.00	300,719.02	17.63
Cumbria	499,849.00	251,930.63	50.40

Rural IS8 Footprint of Combined Authorities

- Rural economies vital to meeting SAs contribution to growth
- E.g. IS8

Combined Authorities	Total IS8 numbers	Urban IS8 firms %	Rural IS8 firms%
Devon & Torbay CA	7,335	54.2%	45.8%
York and North Yorkshire MCA	7,359	56.4	43.6
Greater Lincolnshire MCCA	6,242	61.0	39.0
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough MCA	8,954	66.1	33.9
Hull and East Yorkshire MCA	3,822	75.6	24.4
East Midlands MCCA	15,581	79.4	20.6
North East CA MCA	10,801	82.2	17.8
Lancashire CA	10,634	80.2	19.8
Tees Valley MCA	3,205	86	14
West Yorkshire MCA	17,798	88.2	11.8
South Yorkshire MCA	8,732	92.4	7.6
West of England MCA	10,291	92.8	7.2
Liverpool City Region MCA	9,147	96.8	3.2
West Midlands MCA	20,808	98.3	1.7
Great Manchester MCA	26,561	99.5	0.5

Combined/Strategic Authorities: Rural lens

House of Lords amendments - rural affairs as a stand-alone area of competence

“The Bill is ... intended to equip mayors and strategic authorities with the powers that they need to support communities across their entire areas. That is why the areas of competence are deliberately broad. This allows a wide range of activity to fall within scope. In this way, rural issues are already reflected” (Baroness Taylor of Stevenage)

“... we cannot accept the amendment because we consider it unnecessary. The areas of competence have been deliberately framed in broad terms, allowing a wide range of activities to fall within scope, including matters relating to rural affairs. ... the existing areas of competence already allow for strategic authorities to address rural needs where relevant.. ... I am happy to commit to bringing forward non-statutory guidance to support strategic authorities in delivering for rural communities” (Miatta Fahnbulleh, MP)

Combined/Strategic Authorities: Rural lens

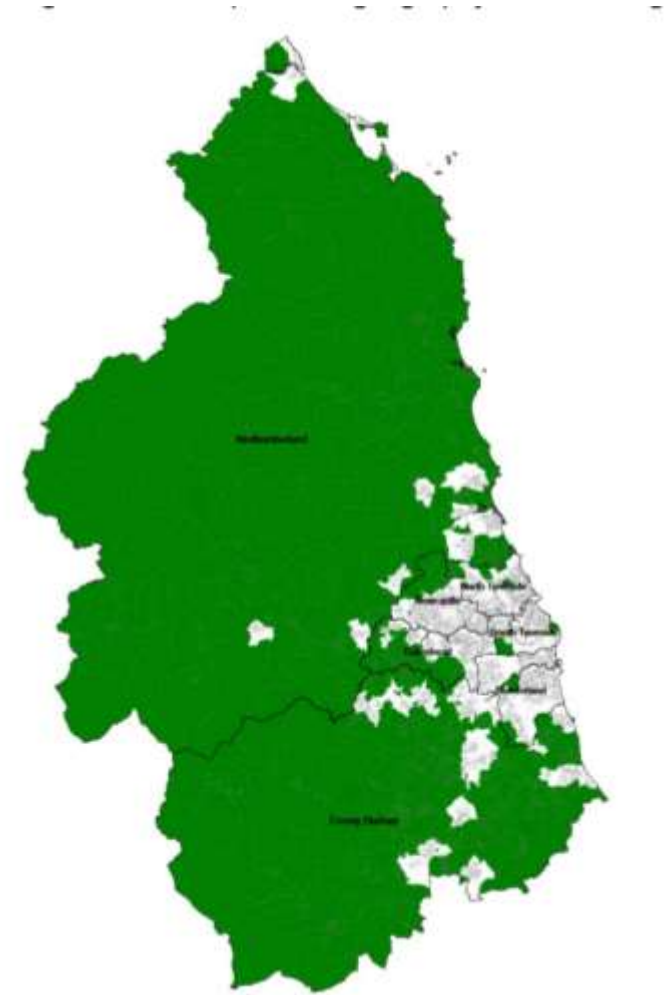
House of Lords amendments - rural affairs as a stand-alone area of competence

“I hear the Minister’s reassurance that rural areas are covered in all the other competences. ... I have heard that phrase so many times, but it never happens for rural areas.” (Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville)

“I take the view that without a clear legal requirement, rural areas risk being overlooked, as they too often are at the moment. ... Non-statutory guidance can, sadly, be ignored because it creates no obligation. This really matters. Rural areas are already under pressure, facing higher delivery costs and feeling the strain of the recent funding review. Without a clear duty, they risk once again becoming an afterthought.” (Zöe Franklin, MP)

North East Devolution Context

“The natural environment, our coast and rural areas, are at the heart of devolution, reflecting the North East’s diverse geography, environment and economy, and the distinctive opportunities and challenges this presents for our region”

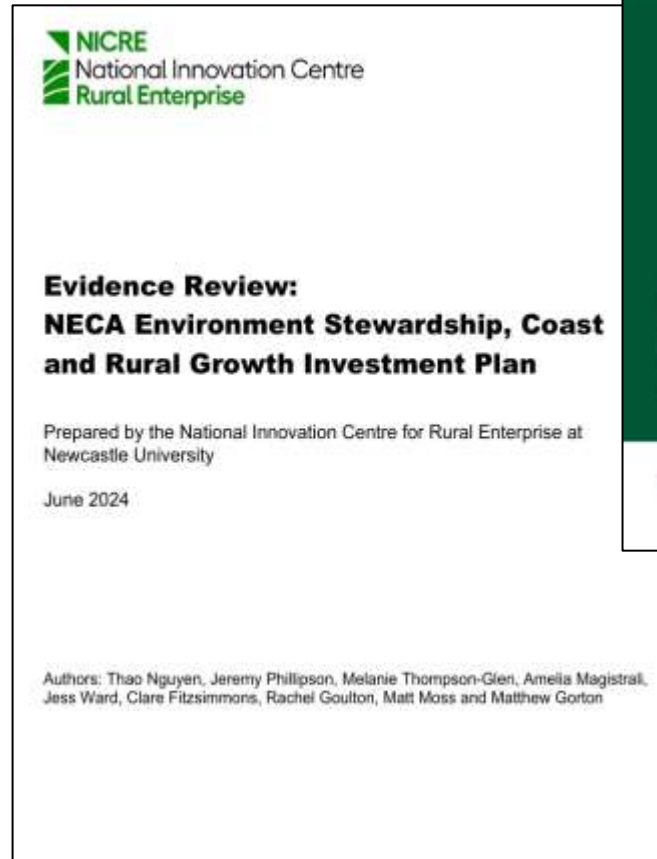


Devolution Deals in the North East

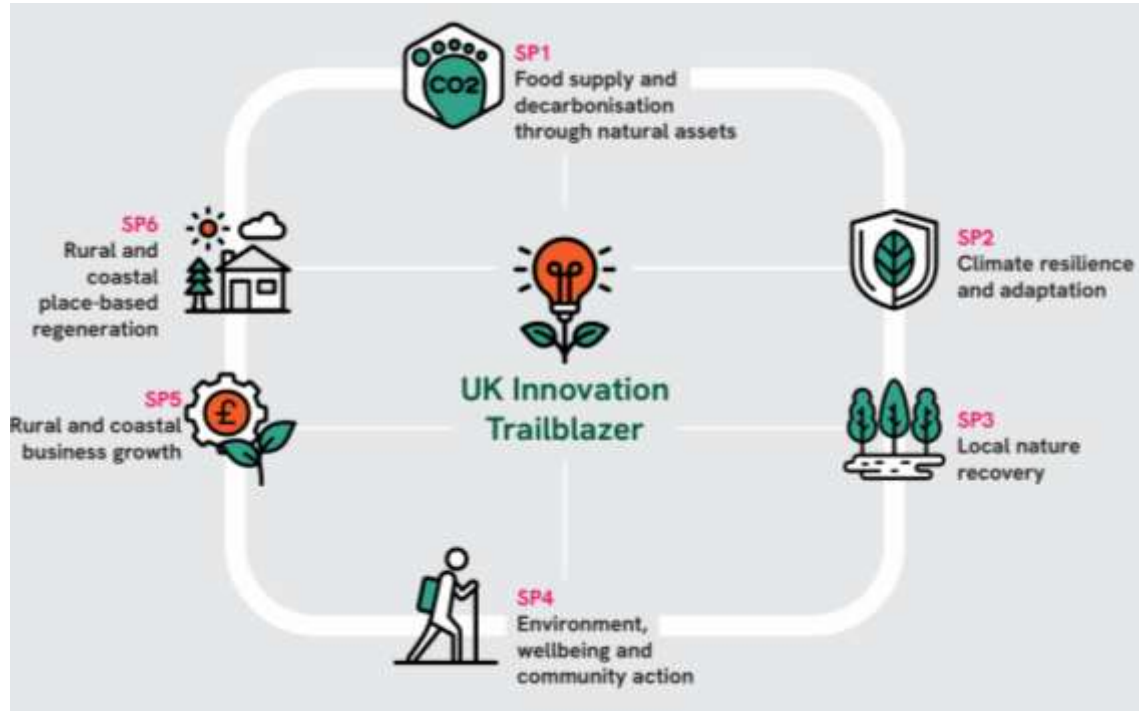
- North of Tyne Devolution Deal: 2018 establishing **North of Tyne Combined Authority**, covering Newcastle, North Tyneside, and Northumberland, with Mayor in 2019
 - Rural growth and Stewardship a key focus, with desire to be “a national exemplar”
- North East Devolution Deal (NECA): 2023, establishing **North East Combined Authority**, covering also Durham, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland, Mayor in 2024
 - Bold on rural economy – setting out clear intentions to accelerate rural growth
 - “The North East will be a UK innovation trailblazer, developing and sharing new solutions to natural environment, coastal and rural challenges”
- Deeper Devolution Deal (2024), committing to a **North East Coastal and Rural Taskforce** with government, to support rural and coastal communities and strengthen quality of life, biodiversity and natural environment.

Building the Environmental Stewardship, Coast and Rural Growth Investment Plan

- Extensive stakeholder engagement
- Building an underpinning evidence base
- NICRE State of Rural Enterprise Survey



Environmental Stewardship, Coast and Rural Growth Investment Plan Strategic priorities



- Approved November 2024 (progressed as early priority)
- Integrated approach to investing in environmental, economic, social and cultural assets
- Simultaneously enhancing nature, growing coastal and rural economies, and improving opportunity and prosperity
- Recognises need to break down barriers to growth such as poor transport connectivity, digital exclusion, access to affordable housing, health inequalities, and longstanding deprivation (**influencing across portfolio areas**).

Phase 1 delivery

Rural and Coastal
Growth
£8.5m

Environment and
Nature
£7.25m

Enabling Fund
£1.25m

Environmental Stewardship, Coast and Rural Growth Investment Plan

Environmental Stewardship

- Food/fibre supply
- Climate resilience and adaptation
- Local Nature Recovery Programme
- Env, Health, Wellbeing

Innovation and Evidence

- Marketplace
- Taskforce

Economic Growth, Regeneration, and Place

- Rural and Coastal Business Growth Programme
- Place-based regeneration

Environmental
Stewardship & Task
Force
(North Tyneside)

Home of the green
energy revolution

A welcoming home
to global trade

Home of real
opportunity

Economic Growth,
Regeneration, and
Place
(Durham)

A North East we are
proud to call home

Home to a growing
and vibrant economy
for all

Coastal and Rural Taskforce: What it is for?

The Taskforce will operate until **September 2027**:

- Bringing together local, regional and national partners to jointly develop **new policy solutions** for coastal and rural communities
- Piloting and evaluating practical interventions in selected localities to understand what works and what can be scaled
- Identifying policy barriers and enablers at local, regional and national levels
- Supporting learning and connection with other coastal and rural initiatives across the UK
- Creating **Coastal and Rural Economy Transformation Blueprints** - practical models, policy recommendations and insights that can be shared not only across the North East but nationally.

Membership

North East representation

- North East Combined Authority (Chair)
- Durham Wildlife Trust
- National Farmers Union
- ACRE partners
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Tyne Rivers Trust
- North Pennines National Landscape
- Local Councils
- Northumberland National Park
- North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
- Newcastle University

Government and agency representation

- DEFRA - Climate Adaptation and Rural Communities (Vice Chair)
- DEFRA policy leads
- MHCLG Local Area Team
- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- Historic England
- Forestry Commission

Three priority areas of focus



Approach to delivery



Coastal and rural policy lens

At each meeting, the Taskforce explores regional or national policy proposals through a coastal and rural lens, helping policymakers understand local impacts and identify opportunities to improve outcomes for these places.



Solution Sessions

Working with partners and communities, the Taskforce runs Solution Sessions to explore shared challenges, test practical ideas in real places, and develop models and recommendations that can inform future policy and investment.

To see how these work in practice, visit our 'Rural Climathons' page.

Initial solution topics

- Community resilience to climate events
- Role of coastal communities
- Nature recovery
- Upland and tenant farming futures
- Place-based working in dispersed communities
- Employability, skills and health related inactivity

Latest updates via **Taskforce microsite** – www.nicre.co.uk/NEtaskforce.

Call to action

We would like to hear about experiences from other regions.

What is important for embedding a rural lens within Devolved Strategic Authorities?

Thank you

Taskforce microsite: www.nicre.co.uk/NETaskforce

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