



GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR THE NORTH WEST

Variations on a Theme?

Looking back at Regions

Mike Chambers – Head of Local Government



Values

Freedom

Frameworks that support social responsibility and civil liberties

Fairness

Those who cannot, we always help

Responsibility

Those who can, do

A Big Society matched by Big Citizens

Means

Decentralisation

Public Service Reform

Political Reform

A Smaller State

**Deficit Reduction and
Economic Recovery**

A successful Big Society will deliver economic prosperity and opportunity for all, strong families and communities, and a thriving democracy characterised by real power in the hands of every citizen.



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE NORTH WEST

Government Office for the North West

Key themes of the Coalition's programme include



- Freedom
- Fairness,
- Responsibility
- the Big Society and big citizens
- Decentralisation and, most urgently,
- Deficit reduction





GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE NORTH WEST

Government Office for the North West.

Measures impacting on Regional Economic Agenda (1)

- **Giving communities the right to bid to take over local state-run services**



- **Encouraging community owned renewable energy schemes – including allowing communities that host renewable energy projects to keep the additional business rates they generate**



- **Abolishing Regional Spatial Strategies and returning decision-making powers on housing and planning to local councils**

- **Reforming the planning system to give neighbourhoods far more ability to shape the places in which their inhabitants live based on open source planning principles**

- **Abolition of the IPC**

- **Providing incentives for local authorities to increase housing supply and promote local economic development**



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE NORTH WEST

Government Office for the North West.

Measures impacting on Regional Economic Agenda (2):



- Freezing council tax in England for 1-2 years in partnership with local authorities
- Giving councils a general power of competence
- Halting local government restructuring
- Radical devolution of power to local councils, communities, neighbourhoods and individuals
- Greater financial autonomy to local government and community groups
- A review of local government finance
- Abolition of GOL and consideration of the case for abolishing other Government Offices



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE NORTH WEST

Government Office for the North West. Coalition and the Regions

- Smaller Government, so remove excess administration
- Voluntary combinations of local authority areas
- Increased powers to councils, their communities and citizens



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE NORTH WEST

Government Office for the North West.

The changing relationship between the region and the local

- Government redefining governance – so national and local count in planning terms BUT localities can form voluntary combinations to deliver on scale considered to be most appropriate
- Genuine desire to empower individuals, communities and local authorities (power of general competence) but fiscal control becomes firmer
- Interesting to witness the debate about RDAs - seen to have been effective advocates but voluntary partnerships (like LEPs) will only be funded through funds made available by their sponsors – so the pressure will be on to deliver – with minimal cash!



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE NORTH WEST

Government Office for the North West. Your Turn

- Was there ever regional governance?
- Does the lack of resource change your view?
- Is there room for devolution to local communities and a strong regional tier?
- What is missing – and how can it be provided?