

Mayoral Combined Authority Board

Monday, 05 June 2023

Development of a Northern Pan-Regional Partnership

Is the paper exempt from the press and public?	No
Reason why exempt:	Not applicable
Purpose of this report:	Discussion
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Has it been included on the Forward Plan of Key Decisions?	Not a Key Decision

Director Approving Submission of the Report:

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Executive Summary

Government Ministers and officials have set out an ambition to create a Northern Pan-Regional-Partnership. This paper sets out the background and current status of the proposal, and establishes some principles on which further engagement could be developed.

What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?

South Yorkshire plays a key economic role in the wider Northern Economy. The development of more formal partnership arrangements present an opportunity for South Yorkshire to play a full role in northern policy and strategy development and to benefit from closer working relationships with the Government on Northern specific issues.

Recommendations

The MCA Board are asked to:

1. Note the Government's intention to establish a formal Northern Pan Regional Partnership (PRP).
2. Consider and endorse a set of South Yorkshire governing principles on which engagement on the development of a PRP will be based.
3. Note the work being led by the NP11 to determine future PRP arrangements and the intention of the MCA Executive Team to engage in its development.

Consideration by any other Board, Committee, Assurance or Advisory Panel
None.

1. Background

1.1 **Establishing a formal Pan Regional Partnership**

The Government's has signalled its intention to support the establishment of a formal Pan Regional Partnership (PRP) body. This would include formal national government status, national capacity funding and an agreement on how the PRP would work with Ministers and government departments.

Current arrangements

The North comes together through a range of mechanisms, including the sub-national transport body Transport for the North, the Convention of the North, the NP11 (a grouping of the eleven LEP areas across the North) and through a range of other bodies such as the N8 (a grouping of the eight research intensive Universities) and other forums.

These are principally informal arrangements – often brought together informally through the NP11 and the Convention of the North. These arrangements are broadly considered by stakeholders to have worked well.

The only formal statutory body that exists to develop a pan-Northern position and programme of investment is on major Northern transport issues through Transport for the North (TfN).

Alongside the PRP considerations the Northern Mayors and Council Leaders of the Convention of the North have also been discussing the arrangements in place to develop the Convention of the North process, as they seek to bring together partners and develop and deliver their programme.

The Government currently provide core funding for the delivery of the NP11 – and are currently developing a funding agreement for the 23/24 work as a precursor for PRP status.

The MCA and LEP do not contribute to the running costs of the NP11 as it is currently established, however, it does make a small financial contribution to the Convention of the North.

1.2 **The latest position on the establishment of a Northern PRP**

The Government, and early engagement with the NP11 and consultees suggest that any new arrangements should:

- Build upon existing administrative arrangements of NP11 as a starting point, strengthening these structures and extending membership to provide a more representative body.
- Primarily be a coordinating body, bringing partners together to address priority areas, which will necessarily include some advisory outputs.
- Be led by evidence (with the regional evidence base function a core element) and the input of partners in establishing priorities. Engagement so far suggests that coordinating work on Trade & Investment and Innovation would present clear added value.
- Ensure TfN have representation on the PRP board opening TfN up to a broader audience focused on general economic development.
- Explore a membership model that balances between local government representatives and non-government members, including TfN, academic representation, non-LEP business representation and perhaps the voluntary sector.
- A new body will not itself have a delivery role but should be able to influence activity in the North, working with delivery bodies (including MCAs) to address priority areas.
- The Chair will be an independent person recruited by a transparent process, and with Ministerial approval for any appointment.

It is also clear that the Government will need to ensure appropriate ministerial and senior civil servant engagement in the body to make it as effective as possible, including demonstrating a clearer sense of buy-in from Ministers across Departments.

1.3 **South Yorkshire's position in relation to Northern networks and partnerships**

South Yorkshire has strong representation in existing Northern arrangements, including being a formal member of Transport for the North, a member of the NP11, and an active contributor from both the Mayor and Council Leaders with the Convention of the North (including hosting the 2019 Convention of the North at Magna, Rotherham).

The MCA and LEP also play a full part in a range of northern partnerships including the Northern Evidence Network and working groups / bodies working together on trade and investment, culture and place-making, northern life sciences and innovation.

1.4 **Areas of focus for the Pan Regional Partnership**

The form and function of the PRP is still to be determined. However, it is clear that there are areas of work that naturally lend themselves to a greater Northern focus. These include:

- Building the North's evidence base and research – building upon the work of the Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review.
- Ensuring transport planning and investment is an enabler of the North's economic potential.

- Building collaboration and clarity on the North's collective innovation capabilities.
- Building collaboration and joint trade and investment promotion; building a more coherent programme of international engagement with the Government.

1.5 **Key principles driving the process to date**

A number of key principles have driven the thinking on the development of Northern Pan Regional Partnership to date.

These are that any new body should be:

- Focused: strategic and evidence-based, rather than operational or political,
- Growth-driven: starting with a shared, ambitious economic vision, reflected in its remit and leadership,
- Collaborative: convening relevant partners driven by a common purpose on behalf of the whole North rather than own place or interests,
- Balanced: partnership of elected leaders, business, academia, and others,
- Diverse: reflecting the strengths of areas right across the North,
- Agile: numbers should be limited so as to support responsive decision making.

In addition, it is proposed that a PRP will:

- Need to demonstrate new structures will provide additional resources and/or influence over national policy,
- Need absolute clarity of purpose to avoid "mission creep",
- Need to be "of the North"/"our voice in Govt" rather than vice versa,
- Be able to build upon the strong appetite for international, investor-facing, activity championing the North/"front door to the North",
- Enable a simplifying of a collection of pan-Northern bodies.

2. **Key Issues**

2.1 The South Yorkshire MCA must consider:

- Whether it wishes to support a move to a more formal arrangement through a PRP.
- The principles on which the arrangements should be developed.

2.2 **Moving to a formal PRP model**

Given the direction of travel set out by the Government, and the North's increasingly strong track record of advocacy and engagement, of strong Northern evidence-based policy development and coherency through the Convention of the North there is a positive case for continuing to bring together under the banner of a

PRP a number of groups / partnerships that already work on a Northern geography.

2.3 **Establishing a set of key principles for South Yorkshire underpinning the development of a new PRP**

In addition to the key points set out in section 1.2 and 1.5 of the report it is proposed that the MCA agree a set of principles on which the development of a PRP should be established.

These are set out for consideration below:

- That South Yorkshire political, business and academia input be clearly represented and reflected in any new governance model.
- That the work of the Pan Regional Partnership be regularly reported to the MCA Board – and regular engagement mechanisms established for the MCA and its advisory boards to influence Northern policy development.
- That any new body has legitimacy and buy-in from across the whole of the North (both mayoral and non-mayoral areas) but does not in any way detract from the delivery role of the MCAs
- That the ability of South Yorkshire to determine its own policy and strategic direction remains the preserve of the MCA and council areas.

3. **Options Considered and Recommended Proposal**

3.1 **Option 1**

The MCA Board support the direction of travel underway at the Northern level to establish a PRP on the basis of the principles set out in section 2.3 of the report.

3.2 **Option 1 Risks and Mitigations**

More formal arrangements may limit the freedom and flexibility of the North's partnerships to operate. In addition, securing formal Government status as a PRP may be limiting in enabling those Northern partners to speak as independent voices / bodies.

The MCAs ability, along with other Northern partners to develop both the form and function in partnership with the Government enables us to manage some of the inherent risks of establishing a more formal partnership.

3.3 **Option 2**

Seek to retain an informal network of Northern level partnerships outside of a PRP.

This option is discounted on the basis of the clear direction of travel set out by the Government and the opportunity for the MCA and other Northern partners to develop both the form and function of new PRP arrangements.

3.4 **Option 2 Risks and Mitigations**

n/a

3.5 **Recommended Option**

Option 1.

4. **Consultation on Proposal**

- 4.1
1. The South Yorkshire LEP Board will discuss the PRP at its July meeting.
 2. The NP11 Chair, Deputy Chair, Board, and officials have begun the process of engaging with partners over how to achieve this. However, how to develop new governance structures – while retaining a strategic, evidence-based focus; balancing competing interests; reflecting the diversity of the North; and keeping decision making agile and efficient – presents notable challenges and reputational risks.

5. **Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

- 5.1
- The NP11 have commissioned external support to develop the form and the function of a PRP. The support will provide greater capacity to engage with the broad range of stakeholders involved, as well as an independent rigour in developing options that command buy-in from those stakeholders. This work will take place over the Summer of 2023 with a view that there may be the opportunity to formally announce / launch a PRP in Autumn 2023.

The approval of the recommendations set out in the paper will inform the MCAs engagement in the process.

6. **Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice**

- 6.1
- The Government currently provide core funding for the delivery of the NP11 – and are currently developing a funding agreement for the 23/24 work as a precursor for Pan Regional Partnership status.

The MCA do not contribute to the running costs of the NP11 as it is currently established. It does make a small financial contribution to the Convention of the North.

The form and function work being undertaken may establish a range of delivery options that could include a request for an MCA financial contribution.

7. **Legal Implications and Advice**

- 7.1
- None at this stage.

8. **Human Resources Implications and Advice**

- 8.1
- There are no direct HR implications as a result of this paper.

9. **Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice**

- 9.1
- None at this stage.

10. **Climate Change Implications and Advice**

10.1 There are no direct implications of this report for the climate or delivery of the Mayoral Combined Authority's Net Zero commitment.

11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice

11.1 This report has no implications on ICT.

12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice

12.1 The work of the MCA's communications and marketing function is already engaged directly with partners and stakeholders at the Northern level, especially on programmes where joint activity such as the Convention of the North and Trade and Investment activity is underway.

A potential shift to a PRP is likely to help align some of this work and create greater opportunities for joint messaging, advocacy and engagement and bespoke campaigns.

List of Appendices Included:

None.

Background Papers

None.