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bulletin

The Regeneration Framework

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Introduction

Published on 17th July 2008, *Transforming places; changing lives: a framework for regeneration*¹ sets out the Government's proposals – for consultation – that aim to shape the way that regeneration is carried out in the future. The publication of the Regeneration Framework follows recommendations in the *Review of sub-national economic development and regeneration*² for a consistent framework to help improve prioritisation and co-ordination and to tighten the focus of investment on barriers to economic growth and economic inclusion. In light of this, a key theme that runs throughout the framework is the 'renewed focus on ensuring that regeneration tackles the underlying economic challenges to increase social mobility'. This Regeneration Framework has been produced in order to 'transform the lives of people in the most deprived areas' (p.4). Despite strong national and regional economic performance in recent years, there remain significant regional disparities and relatively high income inequalities. As such, the aim of the Regeneration Framework is to promote economic inclusion and significantly, the Framework emphasises the Government's view that economic development ought to be *the* driver of regeneration activity. This bulletin seeks to summarise and analyse the framework by:

- outlining how regeneration is defined in the Framework;
- assessing why regeneration is important and the core drivers of the Regeneration Framework;
- setting out the key proposals contained in the Framework;
- considering who should be involved in regeneration activity.

¹ Department for Communities and Local Government (2008) *Transforming places; changing lives: A framework for regeneration* (London: HMSO)

² HM Treasury (2007) *Review of sub-national economic development and regeneration*. (London: HMSO)

How the Regeneration Framework defines regeneration

What is meant by 'regeneration' is often unclear, and is attached to a range of activities, from large scale physical development to much smaller scale, local level community initiatives and projects. The term is often also conflated with economic development. However, the two are not inherently linked. It is with this in mind that the Government attempts to define regeneration in the Framework. Not all economic development is regeneration, and economic growth does not necessarily foster economic inclusion. The Government believes that the benefits of investing in regeneration are wide reaching. Not only will it help to reduce economic disparity and levels of worklessness, it will improve the skills of the population; promote science and innovation; raise educational attainment; improve health and wellbeing; make communities safer; and promote community cohesion and empowered, active communities.

To provide clarification upon the definition of regeneration, the Framework begins by providing an overview of the Government's definition of regeneration, which it is useful here to highlight. According to the Government:

'Regeneration is a set of activities that reverse economic, social and physical decline in areas where market forces will not do this without the support from government'³.

The aim of regeneration activity is, according to the Framework, to:

- tackle economic inactivity and barriers to work;
- improve places and attract inward investment;
- unlock local economic and community potential;
- deliver more effective services;
- create equality; reducing child poverty, unemployment rates for the disadvantaged, and income inequalities.

The core drivers of the Regeneration Framework

Having outlined the Government's definition of regeneration, this bulletin will now move on to consider the regeneration challenges and key themes that are identified in the Framework. According to the Government, there are strong social and economic arguments for investment in regeneration, with the belief that 'regeneration should be aimed at improving both equity and efficiency, delivering economic growth that delivers improvements in deprived areas' (p.12). Despite strong national and regional economic performance in recent years, there remains a significant gap in prosperity between regions and within cities. Consequently, the UK has notable social disparities with high levels of child poverty, poor employment rates for the disadvantaged, regional disparities and relatively high income inequalities. This leaves some areas failing to benefit from wider economic growth. Of particular concern to the Government is the concentration of worklessness, which remains a significant and growing problem. Dealing with worklessness is one of the Government's key challenges and has shaped recent policy, particularly around health and well-being, nurturing skills and alleviating child poverty. This has played out in the introduction of the worklessness and skills focused Working Neighbourhoods Fund as the direct replacement for the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. In light of this policy context, worklessness emerges as an important theme in the Regeneration Framework:

³ This definition is taken from the *Review of sub-national economic development and regeneration* (see footnote 2)

Driver 1: Worklessness

The term 'worklessness' has developed in the last ten years in an attempt to better describe the way in which the labour market in Britain has changed since the early 1980s, with decreasing levels of unemployment but increasing levels of economic inactivity. It is this latter phenomenon that worklessness attempts to describe whereby a significant proportion of the labour market are not only out of work but also tend to be farthest from the labour market with significant barriers to re-engaging with employment. As such, the term is useful in that it goes beyond traditional definitions of unemployment.

Whilst overall the employment rate has risen in recent years, there remain areas of the UK and sections of the population that have not benefited from this trend. Rather, there have been increasing levels of worklessness, and in particular high levels of long-term Incapacity Benefit claimants. This is due to a number of factors including poor educational attainment; cultures of unemployment and worklessness; economic restructuring; low skill levels; chaotic lifestyles; ill health; a lack of confidence; and poor transport links. Worklessness remains a pressing issue with statistics from the Annual Population Survey showing that in June 2007 there were 6,583,800 economically inactive people of working age, which equates to 21.4% of all working age people.

Dealing with the problem of worklessness is one of the Government's key challenges and has shaped recent policy, particularly with the introduction of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund. In November 2007, as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Government made a commitment to changing the focus of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. At the end of March 2008, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and the Safer Stronger Communities Fund came to an end, forming part of a new approach to regeneration focusing on economic development and enterprise in the most deprived areas. Central to the shift in policy is the creation of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF), which will seek to provide resources to tackle worklessness, increase enterprise and employment, as well as addressing low skills levels.

In light of this, tackling worklessness emerges as one of the key themes of the Regeneration Framework, and is a key facet of the Government's aim that regeneration needs to be more tightly focused on tackling the underlying economic challenges. According to the Regeneration Framework, reducing levels of worklessness and promoting enterprise 'can provide a cornerstone for regeneration, bringing new money into the local economy, creating a greater sense of ambition for everyone who lives there' (p.24). It is felt that tackling worklessness, and other economic challenges, will have a wide reaching impact on other issues. For example:

- ***Increased health and well-being*** - raising the employment level clearly has significant ramifications for individuals. As the main route out of poverty, being in employment has a positive impact on health, well-being, and social inclusion. In contrast, worklessness and poverty are reflected in levels of ill-health, crime, and poor levels of attainment at school. As the Department for Work and Pensions report *Ready for work: full employment in our generation* states: 'Work is good for you: people who work are better off financially, better off in terms of their health and well-being, their self-esteem and the future prospects for themselves and their families' ⁴.

⁴ Department for Work and Pensions (2007) *Ready for work: full employment in our generation* (London: HMSO)

- **Tackling child poverty** - statistics from the DWP show that in 2007, 16.0% of children under the age of 16 were living in a working-age household where no adult works⁵. As such, raising employment levels is also seen as vital for reducing child poverty and so-called 'cycles of deprivation'.
- **Nurturing skills** - a key theme to emerge from recent policy is long-term career progression and continued learning. This is part of the Government's wider strategy to nurture skills. As such, it is not just about raising the employment rate, but also encouraging people's 'employability'. Finding a job is not enough to give long-term security, and in order for individuals to sustain and progress their career, they will need to develop new skills. The *Leitch Review of Skills*⁶ put forward the view that investment in knowledge and skills is essential in order for the UK to compete in the global economy and for promoting productivity, the creation of wealth and social justice in the UK.

Driver 2: Devolution

In line with recent Government rhetoric, devolution is an important theme that weaves through the Regeneration Framework. The Government states that one of the key aims of the Framework is to devolve power: 'decisions about where to invest should be made as locally as possible... making programmes fit places, not places fit programmes' (p.3). The Regeneration Framework reaffirms the role of local authorities, putting them 'at the heart of delivery of regeneration, identifying local regeneration priorities and negotiating delivery arrangements with local; regional; and national partners'. The Government's attempt to increase devolution to the local level is perhaps best understood within the context of a number of policy documents: the *Lyons Inquiry*, the *Local Government White Paper and Bill*, and the *Review of sub-national economic development and regeneration*. These documents signal a shift towards the devolution of power from central government to local government.

*Local Government White Paper and Bill*⁷

- Published in October 2006, this paper and subsequent parliamentary bill in October 2007 advocated measures to give local authorities more opportunity to lead their area, work with other services, and better meet the public's needs. This approach sees the rejection of the 'one size fits all' model. Rather, councils are to be provided with the freedom and space to respond with flexibility to local needs and demands. Local authorities will therefore have the powers, and the responsibilities, to shape local places.
- In a break away from the more traditional vertical power relationship, *The Local Government White Paper* sets out a vision of a horizontal power relationship between central and local government. In terms of the performance framework, this paper began to increase the significance of Local Area Agreements, establishing them as a tool to enhance performance management in the local public sector.

⁵ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/ofa/indicators/indicator-1.asp>

⁶ HM Treasury (2006) *Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills* (London: HMSO)

⁷ Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) *Strong and Prosperous Communities - Local Government White Paper*. (London: HMSO)

*Review of sub-national economic development and regeneration*⁸

- Published July 2007, the review highlighted the importance of Local Government to localities and in particular its role as a 'place-shaper' for localities and local economies. The review highlighted the importance of local authorities in understanding and shaping their local economies, particularly through the proposal for an Economic Assessment Duty.

*The Lyons Inquiry into Local Government – Place Shaping: a shared ambition for the future of local government*⁹

- The concept of place shaping came to the fore following the publication of the Lyons Review in March 2007. In his report, Sir Michael Lyons argued that local authorities should lead the development of a broad vision for an area and its communities. The crux of the place shaping agenda is to link up the economic and the social within our cities and towns in order to create places that are more prosperous and, crucially, fairer too. Consequently, the approach advocates 'the creative use of powers and influence to promote the general well-being of a community and its citizens'¹⁰. It is hoped that the new powers set out in the *Local Government White Paper* and *Sub-national review* will grant local authorities the responsibility to shape place by developing economic strategies that consider the social problems specific to that area.

Driver 3: Local targeting

In light of this policy context, the Regeneration Framework also states the importance of 'fewer 'one size fits all' national programmes' (p.45). Different areas face different challenges with regard to regeneration, which top-down initiatives often fail to address. The Regeneration Framework also acknowledges that all regeneration activity must recognise the diversity of different locations, especially due to the fact that minority communities and those registering a disability are still over-represented in deprived areas. A recent report from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, *Regeneration and the Race Equality Duty*¹¹, also found that people from ethnic minorities have not always benefited from regeneration investment or been fully engaged in the regeneration process. As such, initiatives to promote regeneration must be targeted and sensitive to specific contexts.

In order to overcome localised problems, regeneration activity therefore must also be specific and relevant to individual locations. The Regeneration Framework states, 'this approach fits well with LAAs which set out shared local priorities for each local authority area' (p.47). Furthermore, the Government expects 'partners to use these agreements as the key mechanism to track progress on regeneration'. As such, not only should regeneration activity be led by local authorities, it must also be subject to the new local performance framework. Whilst the Framework states the importance of locally led regeneration activity, they recognise that all regeneration decisions need to both inform and be informed by investment decisions and perspectives at different spatial levels. That is to say local, sub-regional, regional, and national. Consequently, the approach fits with the emerging Multi Area Agreements. As the Regeneration Framework explains, MAAs 'focus on how to improve economic prosperity and redouble regeneration efforts in sub-regions across the country' (p.47) and 'are particularly

⁸ HM Treasury (2007) *Review of sub-national economic development and regeneration*. (London: HMSO)

⁹ Lyons, M. (2007) *Lyons Inquiry into Local Government* (London: HMSO)

¹⁰ HM Treasury (2007) *Review of sub-national economic development and regeneration*. (London: HMSO)

¹¹ Equality and Human Rights Commission (2007) *Regeneration and the race equality duty* (London: EHRC)

important tool given that they operate beyond the geographic boundaries of the local authority and cover a functioning economic area’.

Driver 4 - Power to communities

In addition to highlighting the role of local authorities in the regeneration process, the Regeneration Framework also stresses the importance of putting citizens ‘in the driving seat’, stating ‘community driven regeneration can provide peer support and peer pressure to deliver improvements in the outcomes that matter most to residents’ (p.45). As such, the Government recommends that neighbourhoods need to take ownership of activities in their neighbourhood. Furthermore, they ought to have incentives to participate in shaping the future of their community in partnership with the local authority. This process of empowering communities has emerged as a significant theme of late, with the publication of the empowerment white paper *Communities in Control: Real People Real Power*¹². Published in July 2008, the white paper sets out the Government’s plans to pass power to individuals, ‘enhancing the power of communities and helping people up and down the country to set and meet their own priorities’ (p.i). The paper is set within the rhetoric of devolution to local places and to local people through the mechanisms of local government and their partners and through community anchors and organisations.

The Empowerment White Paper sets out a number of proposals that will potentially be led by local authorities. For example, increasing access to information available at a local level and explore new and innovative approaches to sharing information both with citizens and with third parties; making public officials such as the local authority chief executive more approachable and visible; encouraging more neighbourhood councils; legislating for more directly elected mayors; and increasing the accountability of local police and health services.

A theme that straddles both the Empowerment White Paper and the Regeneration Framework is the concept of participatory budgeting. The Empowerment White Paper advocates that every local authority uses participatory budgeting in some form by 2012, whilst the Regeneration Framework suggests that participatory budgeting with regard to regeneration activity could help improve participants’ skills and confidence for their own development. For example, by improving people’s understanding of how public budgets are set, and raise their financial skills; enhance skills and confidence in team working and understanding of community issues and community development; improving residents’ skills in project development, presentation and deliberation; and finally, raising residents’ understanding of the councillor’s role.

Key proposals in the Regeneration Framework

Having outlined what the Government means by ‘regeneration’, and the core drivers of regeneration, this bulletin will now go on to outline the key proposals set out in the Regeneration Framework.

Key Proposal 1: Tackling underlying economic challenges

The defining principle of the Framework is that ‘regeneration should be focused on tackling underlying economic challenges and supporting people in the most deprived areas to access new opportunities so that investment is more effectively targeted and that no area is left behind’ (p.10). The Government uses this framework as a platform to reassert their view that regeneration is most effective when it focuses on tackling the underlying economic challenges that cause concentrations of deprivation and worklessness. The Framework states,

¹² Communities and Local Government (2008) *Communities in control: real people, real power* (London: HMSO)

'[regeneration] should tackle the place-specific economic barriers that prevent markets working effectively; enabling households, businesses, entrepreneurs, private developers and investors in deprived areas to adapt to new challenges and opportunities as they arise' (p.23).

The Regeneration Framework also sets out 3 key priority targets to drive regeneration activity:

1. improving economic performance in deprived areas;
2. improving rates of work end enterprise in deprived areas;
3. creating sustainable places where people want to live and can work, and businesses want to invest.

Key Proposal 2: Moving from an output to an outcome culture

The Framework also indicates a shift in emphasis from output towards outcome targets. This means that regeneration success should no longer be measured simply by outputs (for example, brownfield land remediated), but 'by the outcomes that it will deliver for communities, with a priority focus on improving economic outcomes' (p.37). Despite the over arching emphasis on tackling economic challenges, the Government maintains that economic outcomes must translate to 'real improvements in the lives of residents of deprived areas' (p.38). For example, reducing anti-social behaviour, promoting community cohesion and wellbeing etc. However, it is worth noting that the Regeneration Framework lacks guidance as to what these outcomes will be and how they will be measured.

Key Proposal 3: Making the regeneration investment decision

The Government states that the locations that are to receive regeneration funding should be determined by local and regional partners, based both on the extent of deprivation and the opportunity to deliver long-term change. The Framework sets out criteria to analyse the nature of the regeneration challenge in a particular area. These four criteria can, according to the Framework, provide a useful approach to determine the type of regeneration that is most appropriate and most likely to be successful in a particular place. Types of regeneration activity could include: improving the physical environment, improving opportunities for people, and improving the wider economy. Whilst not claiming to be 'hard and fast measures', they nevertheless provide a starting point for analysis. These criteria are:

- ***Criterion 1: The level of deprivation, as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).***
 - Analysing the data contained in the IMD and other national and local data sources will enable areas to understand the regeneration challenges in particular areas and consider the cross-cutting drivers of poor outcomes in deprived areas.
- ***Criterion 2: The strength of the wider sub-regional economy.***
 - It is important to look at the wider context of a deprived neighbourhood or area. Is the deprived area within a broadly successful sub-regional economy? Or is it within an under-performing economy?
 - In order to assess this, there must be an analysis of the strength of the economic base in the sub-region – including the headline indicators of economic performance and an analysis of the underlying drivers.
 - The wider context often determines what would be the most effective way of regenerating an area. For example, is the challenge to provide the deprived neighbourhood with better

transport links to well-performing areas? Or is it more appropriate to strengthen the sub-regional economy or create new employment hubs?

- **Criterion 3: The economic and social characteristics of the area.**
 - It is important to analyse the movement of people into or out of an area as well as looking at the area overall in order to differentiate between areas that provide a 'launch pad' for residents who move on to better areas and those that are isolated from opportunity.
- **Criterion 4: The dynamics of the area and how it is changing over time.**
 - The type of regeneration activity will depend on the dynamics of an area. As such, trend analysis is essential in order to establish how deprivation has changed within the area. The criteria for this analysis may include: employment rates, health, crime statistics, house prices, educational performance, and business start-ups.

Key Proposal 4: Appraisal and evaluation

The Regeneration Framework states that 'in order to ensure value for money in regeneration investment it is important that the delivery is under-pinned by strong economic appraisal based on existing good practice' (p.58). This ought to consider both the direct and longer-term impact of regeneration activity. Furthermore, it is important that the consideration of the impact of regeneration activity on different groups, whether intended or unintended, is built into the appraisal and evaluation process.

Who needs to be involved in driving forward this regeneration framework and what are their roles?

The Regeneration Framework highlights the role of economic development as being intrinsic to regeneration activity and reiterates the processes required to plan and deliver effective regeneration activity. It also begins to set out key anticipated roles for different sectors and bodies involved in regeneration:

The role of central government

The regeneration framework proposes six core and largely policy and administrative based roles for central government in the regeneration process:

- integrate investment appraisals that impact on regeneration, ensuring those appraisals effectively measure wider community, environmental, and economic benefits from investment;
- unringfence money to enable local partners to tackle joined up problems collectively and with as little bureaucracy as possible;
- encourage partnerships across functional economic areas, including through the process of agreeing Multi Area Agreements;
- merge funding streams where departmental objectives correlate such as the Working Neighbourhoods Fund and the Disadvantaged Areas Fund;
- continue to deliver flexibilities to local partners by supporting the development and delivery of Local and Multi Area Agreements;
- provide responsive mainstream services.

The role of local government

The Regeneration Framework makes a number of recommendations as to what the role of local authorities is in this agenda. Firstly, it suggests that local government must take the lead on delivering economic development and physical and social regeneration in their areas. This follows on from the Government's

attempts to devolve more power to the local level. Local Area Agreements and Sustainable Communities Strategies ought to be used, according to the Framework, to drive positive outcomes for deprived areas. Secondly, the Government proposes that local authorities ought to develop appropriate structures and processes to put communities at the heart of the design and delivery of regeneration. Thirdly, local authorities must play a strategic housing role and create mixed sustainable communities that reflect the diverse needs of both rural and urban settlements and ensuring that the appropriate housing is in place with the necessary infrastructure and support. Finally, the Government states that local authorities are responsible for ensuring that housing and regeneration policies in their local area are mutually reinforcing. This will require working closely with social housing providers, 'and where appropriate to harness their contribution to tackling worklessness and supporting economic development' (p.67).

The role of the social housing sector

The Regeneration Framework makes explicit the link between regeneration and the social housing sector, with the recognition that 'there is a strong geographic correlation between areas of concentrated deprivation and areas of concentrated social housing'. Citing the Labour Force Study of 2007 the Framework states, 'In the 10 per cent most deprived areas, 51 per cent of households are social tenants compared to 16 per cent elsewhere' (p.28). The impact of this concentration of social housing is wide reaching. As the Framework notes 'concentrations of social housing that reflect past rather than present patterns of economic activity can reinforce physical and social isolation from economic activity for disadvantaged groups' (p.28).

In turn, this can lead to higher levels of worklessness amongst social tenants. As the Hills report *Ends and Means: The Future Roles of Social Housing in England*¹³ highlights, 'By Spring 2006 more than half of those of working age living in social housing were without paid work, twice the national rate'. Because of this trend, it has been widely acknowledged by the Government that the social housing sector has a responsibility to encourage tenants to seek employment. Controversially, in February 2008, Housing Minister Caroline Flint MP suggested that those seeking social housing might be required to agree to a contract, committing them to seek employment. Whilst some critics have argued that this would merely stigmatise social housing tenants, it nevertheless underlines the Government's vision of the social housing sector as providing much more than merely 'a roof over people's heads'.

One of the key proposals of the Regeneration Framework relevant to the social housing sector is the Government's effort to continue to bring housing and tackling worklessness closer together so that housing associations and local authorities can help more to tackle worklessness in social housing.

Considering the link between social housing and levels of worklessness, the Regeneration Framework recommends housing strategies must be consistent with the wider economic strategy for the area. It is in light of this view that the Government is establishing the Homes and Communities Agency, which will bring together the Housing Corporation and English Partnerships. According to the Regeneration Framework, the Homes and Communities Agency will 'support local authorities in meeting their housing and regeneration objectives in their local area – to maximise the contribution that housing can make to place-shaping' (p.28).

¹³ Hills, J. (2007) *Ends and means the future roles of social housing in England* (London: CASE)

The Regeneration Framework also recommends that housing and regeneration activities are planned, led and delivered locally, and furthermore that regeneration strategies should 'empower tenants and residents to get involved in the decisions about the future of housing estates through appraising options for change' (p.28). This echoes the Empowerment White Paper which sets out proposals for the Tenant Services Authority which will be responsible for protecting all social tenants in all forms of social housing. The aim of the Tenant Services Authority is to put social tenants at the heart of regulation and also ensure that they are involved in the management of their own homes.

The role of the Homes and Communities Agency

The new Homes and Communities Agency will combine English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation, with the aim of bringing together regeneration and housing into one national agency. According to the Regeneration Framework, the HCA will:

- prioritise regeneration investment in line with geographic priorities outlined in regional funding advice, and will report annually on progress;
- develop integrated housing and regeneration programmes in partnership with local areas, in particular with the aim of supporting economic development and connecting homes to job opportunities;
- consider access to jobs in decisions on location of new social housing;
- support local agencies to put communities at the heart of the design and delivery of regeneration;
- consider with partners how to meet residents' wider needs for training and work when investing in stock;
- co-operate with local authorities to implement their regeneration priorities;
- meet its responsibilities under the race, gender and disability duties, for example working with local and national agencies to ensure that regeneration priorities identify and respond to the needs of diverse communities and consider the impact of regeneration on equality and community cohesion.

The role of the third sector and social enterprise

Another significant theme to emerge from the Regeneration Framework is that the third sector and social enterprises have 'a key role to play in improving outcomes in deprived areas, particularly in linking activities that tackle economic and social outcomes' (p.39). Again this reflects points made in the Empowerment White Paper in which the Government set out proposals for a new Social Enterprise Unit that will champion the role of social enterprises and recognise their contribution in areas such as housing, regeneration, and creating empowered and cohesive communities.

The role of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)

The role of RDAs remains important, with the Framework suggesting that they should co-ordinate the prioritisation of funding so that it best meets areas' specific regeneration challenges. The Framework maintains that RDAs will continue to work with local authorities and Regional Assemblies until their abolition in 2010, in order to delegate their funding. Funding will need to be allocated in line with the regional strategy, MAAs and LAAs – to support economic development activities that are best carried out at local and sub-regional spatial levels, where capacity and appropriate structures exist. The Regeneration Framework also states that RDAs, working with local authorities and Regional Assemblies, ought to develop employment hubs, through promoting enterprise and business growth supporting skills development, and contributing to 'place' development.

The role of the private sector

The private sector continues to have an important role in regeneration activity, with the Regeneration Framework aiming to help give the private sector confidence in the longer term regeneration goals of Government and encourage sustained investment. The Government proposes the mapping of regional regeneration priorities in order to identify the locations where Government is committed to promoting regeneration. These are locations where Government wishes to share the risks of regeneration with developers and investors in the private sector. The Government hopes that these regional regeneration priorities maps will give clarity to the private sector, and will also help departments to align their capital investment strategies with regeneration priority areas.

Conclusion

On the whole CLES welcomes the linkages identified in the regeneration framework between regeneration and economic transformation and economic development. Indeed, the framework provides a useful reiteration of the importance of economic development as identified in the *Review of sub-national economic development and regeneration* and cheerleads many of the themes and proposals contained in the Review.

Devolution

The concept of devolution towards local government to make local economic and regeneration decisions is reflected in the continued emphasis placed upon the value of Multi Area Agreements as mechanisms of collaborative economic governance and as vehicles for transforming local and sub-regional economies.

Local Economic Evidence

The framework also demonstrates the importance of economic evidence through the introduction of the criteria for making regeneration investment decisions. This has important linkages to the Economic Assessment Duty, introduced in the sub-national review. Demonstration of the economic shape and functioning of local economies by local authorities is clearly going to be a key determinant of regeneration investment and activity in the future.

Worklessness

A particular area or theme of economic development at the forefront of contemporary Government policy is worklessness. To this end, the regeneration framework highlights the cross governmental commitment to tackling worklessness with the drive of the framework matching that of the recent Welfare Reform Green Paper.

However, having reiterated many of these drivers of regeneration and local economic development, the framework does not really provide us with any new policy, anything we did not already know, or anything regeneration and local economic development practitioners are not already doing in planning and delivering regeneration activity. Practitioners are: seeking to develop evidence bases with an emphasis on the economic; they are increasingly moving from an output towards outcome culture; and they are considering the importance of economic transformation to regeneration activity and tackling deprivation.

Indeed, few concrete proposals are set out in the framework, with much of the document dedicated to clarifying the Government's view of what regeneration activity is and why it should be invested in. This clarification is welcome and particularly the reflection of regeneration as a sub-set of economic development, but is not accompanied by any new funding or investment for economic development and regeneration at a local level.

The Department for Communities and Local Government are running consultation upon the Regeneration Framework until 31st October 2008, seeking particular viewpoints upon the criteria for regeneration investment decisions; the economic focused priority outcomes; and the roles of different organisations and levels of government in regeneration activity. CLES will be submitting a response to the consultation. If you have any thoughts on the regeneration framework, or would like to contribute to our response please contact: Jessica Smith, 0161 236 7036 or jessicasmith@cles.org.uk.

Bulletin is one of a series of regular policy reports produced by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES). CLES is a not-for-profit think-doing organisation, consultancy and network of subscribing organisations specialising in regeneration, economic development and local governance. CLES also publishes Local Work, Rapid Research and bespoke Briefings on a range of issues.

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