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# LEPs and rural areas

*Andy Dean*



# LEPs and rural areas

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- Background
- Defra and LEPs
- LEP Rural Strategies
- National Audit Office report (March 2016)

# 2010

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“We are writing to you to invite you to work with the Government to help strengthen local economies. The Coalition Government is committed to reforming our system of sub-national economic development by enabling councils and business to replace the existing Regional Development Agencies. The purpose of this letter is to invite local groups of councils and business leaders to come together to consider how you wish to form local enterprise partnerships.”

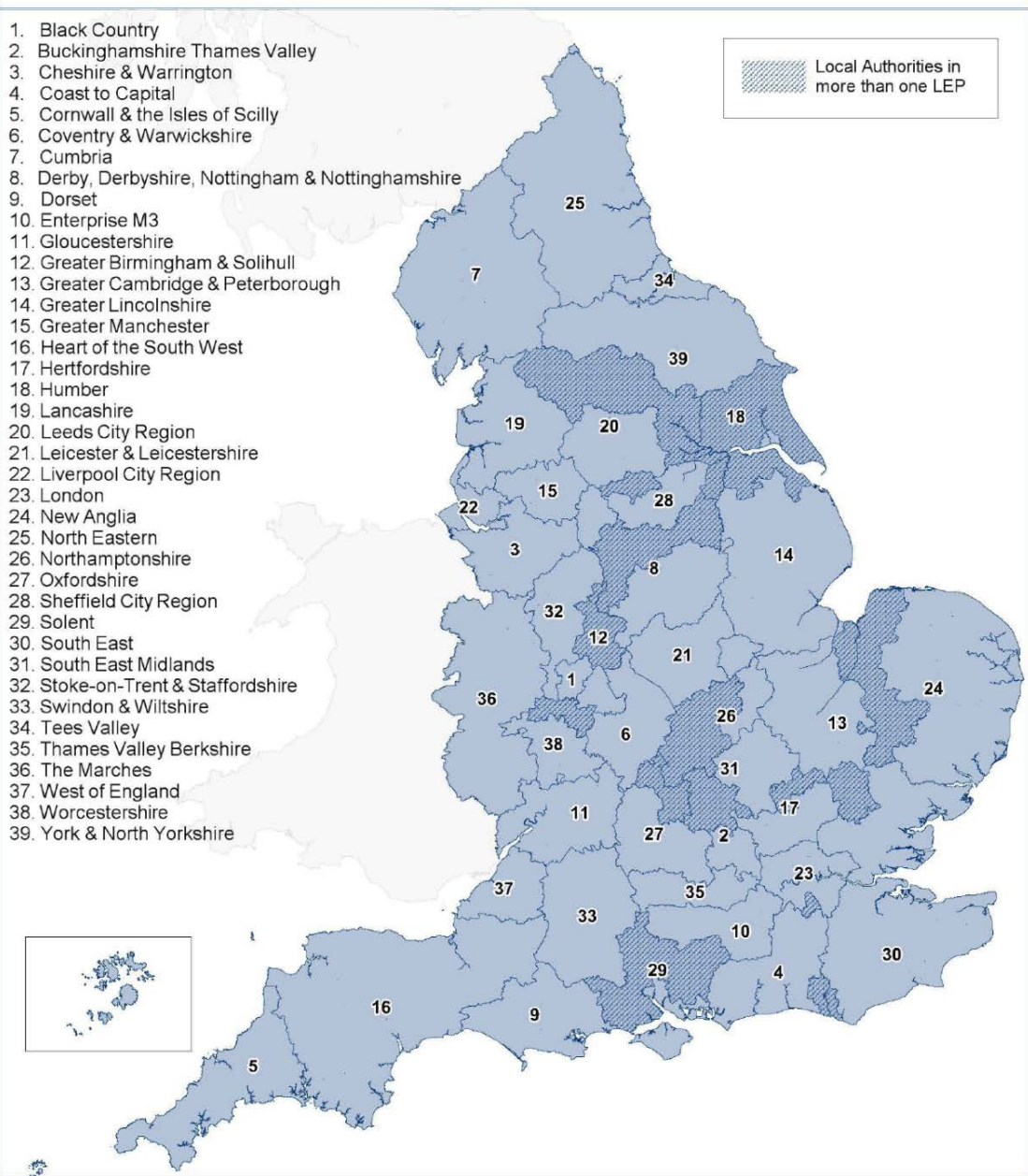
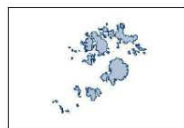
*Vince Cable / Eric Pickles 29 June 2010*



# Local Enterprise Partnerships

1. Black Country
2. Buckinghamshire Thames Valley
3. Cheshire & Warrington
4. Coast to Capital
5. Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly
6. Coventry & Warwickshire
7. Cumbria
8. Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham & Nottinghamshire
9. Dorset
10. Enterprise M3
11. Gloucestershire
12. Greater Birmingham & Solihull
13. Greater Cambridge & Peterborough
14. Greater Lincolnshire
15. Greater Manchester
16. Heart of the South West
17. Hertfordshire
18. Humber
19. Lancashire
20. Leeds City Region
21. Leicester & Leicestershire
22. Liverpool City Region
23. London
24. New Anglia
25. North Eastern
26. Northamptonshire
27. Oxfordshire
28. Sheffield City Region
29. Solent
30. South East
31. South East Midlands
32. Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire
33. Swindon & Wiltshire
34. Tees Valley
35. Thames Valley Berkshire
36. The Marches
37. West of England
38. Worcestershire
39. York & North Yorkshire

 Local Authorities in more than one LEP



# CRC report (November 2012)

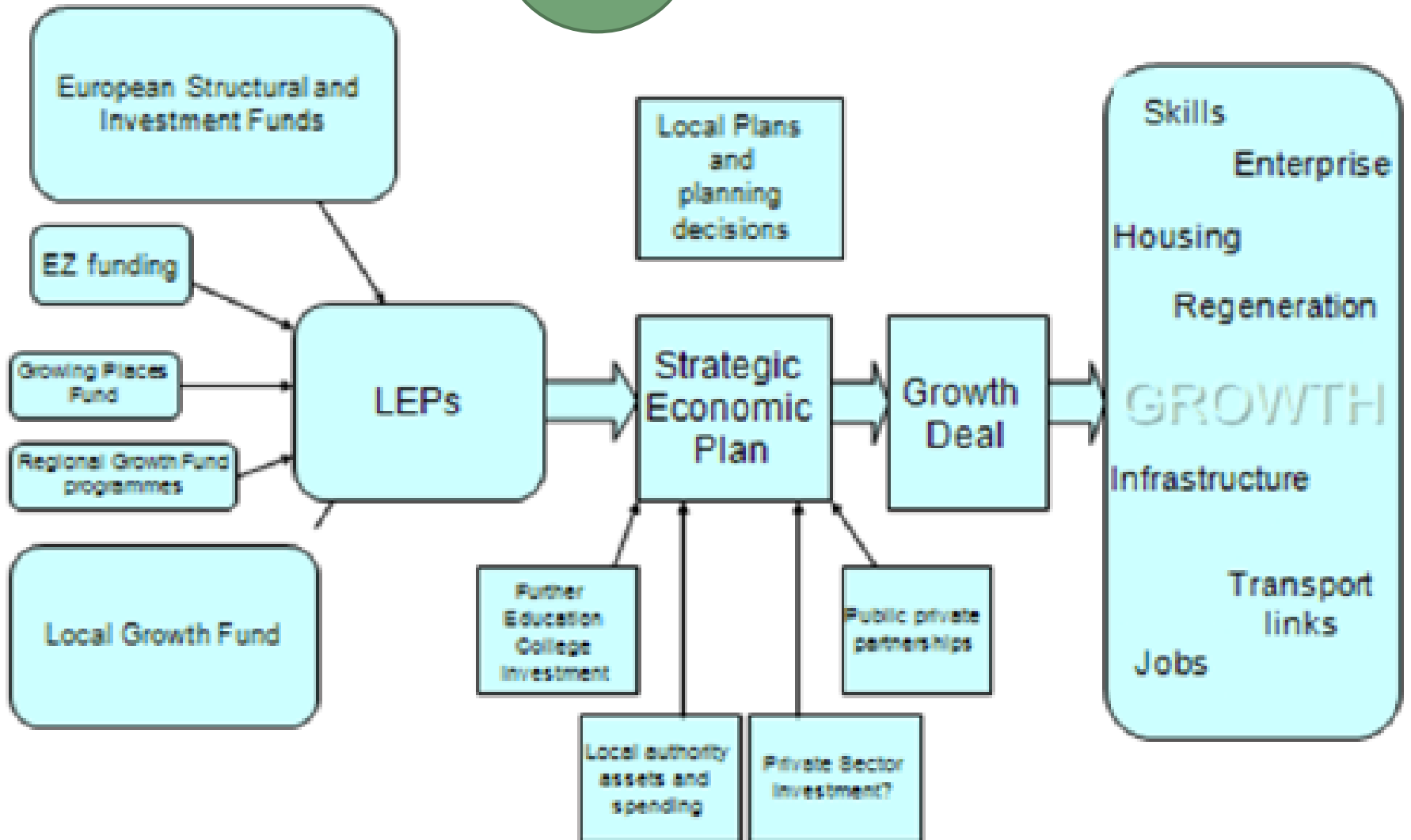
- “Rural areas are present within the boundaries of almost every Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).”
- “Rural communities, and the businesses located within them, have the potential to contribute considerably towards the primary objectives of LEPs.”
- “In order to realise this potential, it is crucial that rural interests are recognised by LEPs as part of their work.”



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government



## Bringing it all together



# Defra LEP Roundtable

## ***Role:***

The Roundtable will discuss issues relating to rural economic growth and productivity and the LEPs role in these. It will provide a forum for members to:

- feed views to Defra Rural Policy, RPA Rural Development Directorate and other Government Departments
- share good practice and innovative ideas
- propose solutions to issues

# Defra LEP Roundtable

## ***Membership:***

- Defra Rural Policy (chair)
- Representatives from all LEPs
- Other organisations represented on local ESIF Sub-Committees, including environmental advisers
- Stakeholder groups representing Rural Development Programme beneficiaries and rural growth interests
- RPA Rural Development Directorate
- Other Defra delivery organisations
- Leads from the other ESIF Programmes and other Government Departments



# Rural Strategies

e.g. South East LEP

<http://www.southeastlep.com/activities/rural>

- Rural economy
- Rural communities
- Rural environment



# An assessment of SEPs

- Vision - *mostly bold*
- Spatial frameworks - *most attempt to reflect spatial dynamics but concerns over capacity*
- Growth versus other considerations - *‘Growth at what cost and for what purpose?’ is a question that some LEPs have not asked themselves.*
- Social inclusion/exclusion – *failure to address these issues. “Many Strategic Economic Plans completely ignore the issue of deprivation.”*
- Planning – *some strong, some very weak*
- Collaboration & coordination – *unclear whether LEPs have facilitated this or simply benefitted from it*

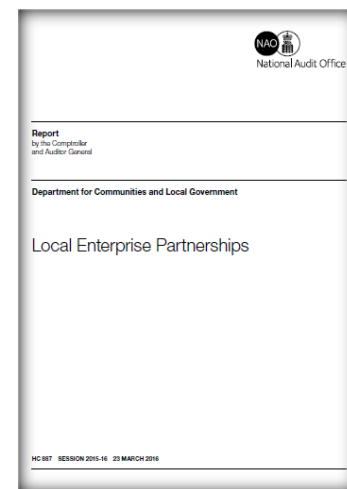
# Key features of LEPs

- A lack of uniformity is the only consistency across LEPs
- They continue to operate with an opaque remit and lack firm institutional foundations
- Many LEPs claim that they are “locally owned” and are “free from central control”
- Responding to ministerial requests, civil service entreaties, invitations and requirements consumes a large proportion of the work of LEPs.
- Stakeholders beyond central government are unanimous in the view that nearly all LEPs are understaffed.

*“Planning for Growth: the role of LEPs in England (final report, July 2015),  
Pugalis, Townsend, Gray & Ankowska*

# National Audit Office report

- Rapid expansion of role
- Unclear fit with devolution landscape
- Lack of quantifiable Departmental objectives
- SEP process seen as useful
- 10% of Assurance Frameworks not in place
- Growth Deal funding flexibility
- LGF in-year spending pressures
- £85M LGF underspend in 2015/16
- High dependency on local authorities & sustainability uncertain
- 5% LEPs consider they have adequate resources to meet government expectations



# Departmental recommendations

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- Clarify fit with other bodies (devolution)
- Medium/long term flexibility for funds
- Set quantifiable objectives
- LEP capacity, taking account of local authority financial sustainability
- Standardise/simplify output reporting
- Implement local assurance frameworks

# Summary

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- Very mixed picture
- Significant capacity issue
- Devolution fit
- Rural economic contribution