



MAKING A SUCCESS OF DEVOLUTION

NAVIGATING ENGLAND'S REGIONAL AND
LOCAL ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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AUTUMN 2017



RETAIL CHECKLIST

This checklist can be used to assist colleagues across your organisation engage with communities.

COMBINED AUTHORITIES AND ELECTED MAYORS

- Share priorities with combined authority and/or mayor in localities where there is a strong presence i.e. head office, distribution centre or significant store portfolio
- Regularly meet with mayor and their team to share local opportunities and/or challenges

LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIPS (LEPS)

- Put forward senior representative on board in areas where there is a strong presence
- Influence the development of Strategic Economic Plans and how funds are spent by participating in working groups

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS (BIDS)

- Inform store managers of benefits of engagement, encourage and incentivise participation
- Regularly attend meetings, inform business plans and participate in activities
- Actively vote in new BID ballots and renewals

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DEVOLUTION LANDSCAPE

WHY LOCAL ENGAGEMENT MATTERS

English devolution comes with opportunities and challenges. This guide aims to assist retailers make the most of local engagement opportunities whether at the regional or local level.

These new dynamics generate a significant amount of uncertainty. The unique nature of retail means that it is found across most communities making their relationship with the local community critically important. However, the industry is undergoing transformational change requiring fewer shops and jobs accentuated by a rapidly rising costs base, market pressures, the availability of new technologies and policies such as the growing burden of business rates. Simultaneously there are particular communities undergoing serious challenges including high deprivation and unemployment. As retail continues to undergo change some communities are at particular risk.

A strong link between retailers and the community harbours strong customer loyalty. The Government has stated its ambition to devolve more powers to local government and retailers are responding to this challenge by further developing plans for local engagement. A critical question arising from the devolution agenda is how local/combined authorities with more powers plan to effectively engage with the business community to ensure continued growth and investment. There is not a statutory requirement to engage businesses, but the BRC has suggested that more should be done to ensure there is regular dialogue between businesses and local government.

The success of places and retailers are linked, and we hope this guide assists retailers find new opportunities to be engaged locally and regionally.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Since the 2010 coalition government and resulting 'devolution revolution' the political world in many ways has been shaken with the 2015 general election leading to majority government, an unexpected 2016 EU referendum result, resulting new prime minister and the 2017 general election leading to minority government. Many have therefore questioned whether devolving to localities in England has the same commitment that it had in the recent past, however, much of what has been previously announced is already in train.

For instance, this past year we have seen the election of mayors in West of England, Greater Manchester, Tees Valley, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Liverpool City Region and the West Midlands. In 2016, Greater London elected its third Mayor of London. Following the merger between two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) the remaining 38 continue to produce strategic economic plans and are in some cases making the case for additional devolution deals. In addition, there are now more than 280 BIDs across the United Kingdom. Before this year's general election, the Industrial Strategy Green Paper placed particular interest on 'place' and the importance of attracting people building upon opportunities of industries such as retail. The subsequent White Paper is expected autumn 2017.

There has also been a fair amount of uncertainty. Since the last BRC local engagement guide Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has been added as a combined authority, however, there have been glitches along the way including the fact the North East, East Anglia, Greater Lincolnshire combined authorities and the Sheffield City Region and Yorkshire-wide proposed devolution deals have fallen through.

After the election, the Local Government Finance Bill was excluded from the Queen's Speech covering Government's agenda for the next two years. The Bill previously included provisions on local retention of business rates growth, the ability for metro mayors to introduce an infrastructure levy up to two per cent of Rateable Value of properties and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) for property owners sharing the same boundaries as existing occupier BIDs. However, Government is still committed to advancing local government financing and is actively encouraging additional local authorities to pilot 100 per cent retention of business rates growth in 2018-19. Those currently piloting including Greater London, Greater Manchester, Liverpool, West of England, West Midlands and Cornwall will continue.

2017 MANIFESTO COMMITMENTS

This past year's general election did not elicit unexpected devolution commitments from the three main parties and did not feature heavily in the campaign.



CONSERVATIVES

- Support local growth through combined authorities, mayoralities and LEPs including funding.
- Ensure each partnership and combined authority responsible for co-ordinating their own local industrial strategy is in alignment with the industrial strategy.
- Give LEPs greater weight by backing them in law.



LABOUR

- Support devolution and believe in handing back power to communities.
- Devolve power to local communities with the necessary funding for local government.
- Devolve powers over economic development, complete with the necessary funding.



LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

- Establish process to devolve further balancing the objectives of more local autonomy and fair equalisation between communities.
- Believe mayoral authorities should not be ranked higher in terms of the powers with which they can be granted.
- Enable even greater devolution of powers from Westminster to councils or groups of councils working together – for example to a Cornish Assembly or a Yorkshire Parliament.

LOCAL IMPACT OF RETAIL

Retail is found across most communities and as the largest private sector employer employs three million people. This is despite that there is a rapidly rising costs base, market pressures, the availability of new technologies which are leading to fewer retail jobs in the future.

In addition to the 245,000 retail units across England, retail head offices are dispersed across the nation providing further opportunities for local engagement. Head offices often recruit for a wide range of skills including accounting, digital, operations and human resources. In addition, large distribution centres provide a large number of jobs in regions across England.

WEST MIDLANDS	LIVERPOOL CITY REGION
£ 235 M 108 K	£ 113 M 65 K
TEES VALLEY	CORNWALL
£ 53 M 26 K	£ 34 M 26 K
GREATER MANCHESTER	GREATER LONDON
£ 254 M 124 K	£ 1,815 M 426 K
WEST OF ENGLAND	CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH
£ 117 M 53 K	£ 88 M 39 K
£ Business Rates Payable by Retailers (2017-18) Retail Jobs (2015)	

BRC RETAILER HEAD OFFICES



Source: BRC

Sources: DCLG National Non-Domestic Rates Return and ONS Business Register and Employment Survey

COMBINED AUTHORITIES AND ELECTED MAYORS

RETAIL CHECKLIST

- Share priorities with combined authority and/or mayor in localities where there is a strong presence i.e. head office, distribution centre or significant store portfolio
- Regularly meet with mayor and their team to share local opportunities and/or challenges

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF COMBINED AUTHORITIES AND MAYORS?

Combined authorities (CAs) can be established by two or more local authorities and take on transport and economic development functions, and any other functions the authorities agree to share. The powers of some combined authorities are currently being strengthened by devolution deals negotiated with central government and by the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act. For example, the Act allows for directly elected mayors across CAs, and the first elections were held earlier this year in West of England, Greater Manchester, Tees Valley, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Liverpool City Region and the West Midlands.

Government has stated its intent to give combined authorities with devolution deals and elected mayors further powers, and now the newly elected mayors have been quick to ask for further responsibilities. For instance, Government has said CAs with elected mayors should be able to raise a business rates supplement (likely to be up to two per cent) to fund major infrastructure projects with the support of LEPs. However, this policy remains in doubt following the surprise 2017 general election and the fact that the Local Government Finance Bill which included the new policy has been excluded from the Queen's Speech outlining the Government's agenda for the next two years.

Mayors are using their authority to outline visions and strategies, and provide opportunities for business engagement to support growth. Combined authorities may also enable a more coherent approach on issues such as transport, licensing, health and waste where local authority policies frequently vary substantially. In addition, opportunities for several local authorities to pool resources together may have positive benefits including costs savings.

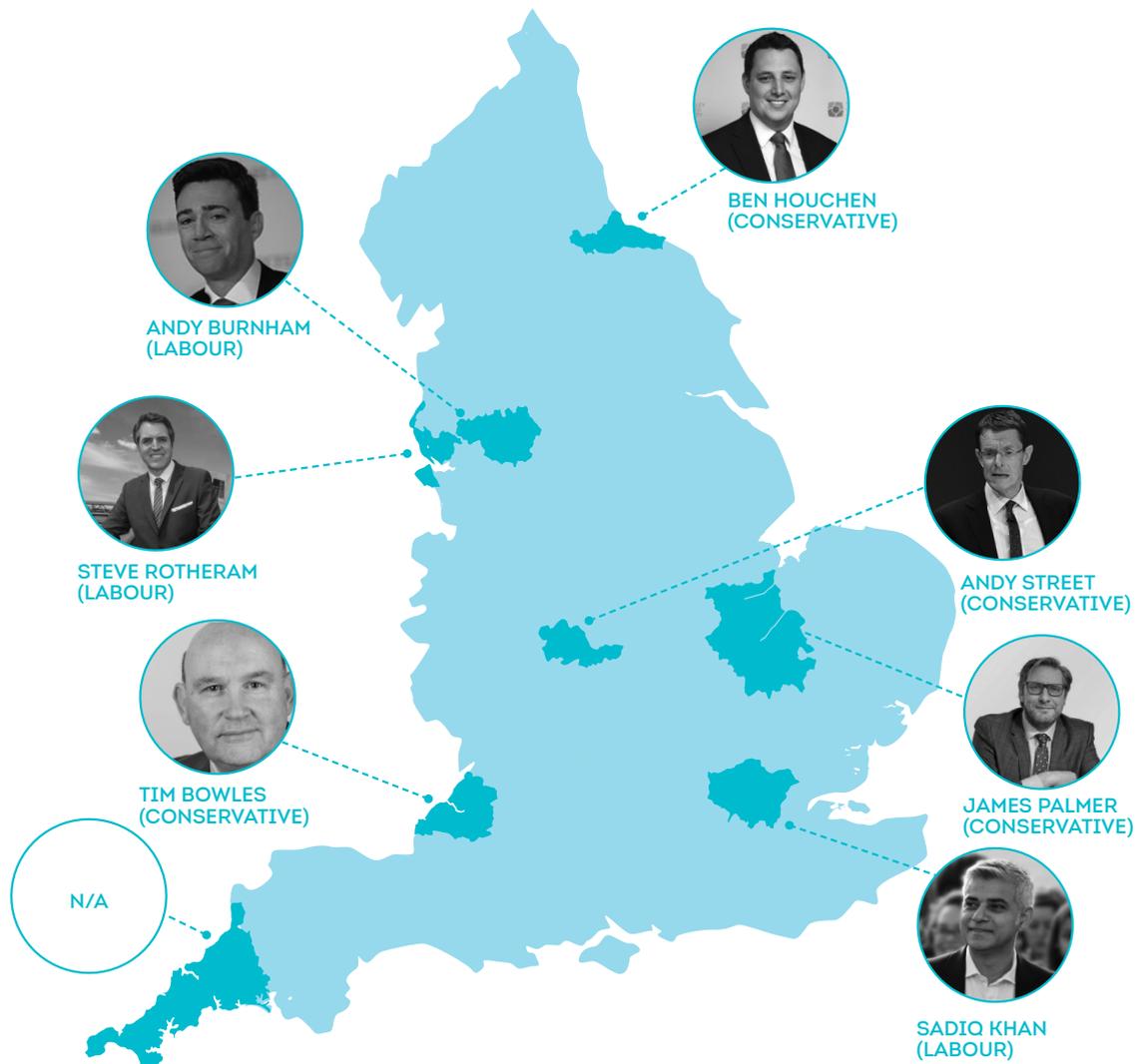
In the future the powers of CAs could be extended by for instance enabling strategic planning to operate across council boundaries similar to the planning powers of the Greater London Authority (GLA). Consistency in approach and clarity to avoid confusion across local authority boundaries creates confidence for investors and developers. On the whole strategic planning could be beneficial for breaking down silos within and between local government in addition to sharing limited resources more efficiently leading to better and more timely planning decisions.

HOW CAN RETAILERS ADVANCE THEIR PRIORITIES?

Engagement will vary from place to place, but will require the development of relationships with officials at each particular combined authority. Meeting with officials once per annum could be valuable in developing relationships for when an issue arises. Developing relationships with directly elected mayors can be particularly helpful in trying to minimise potential bureaucratic barriers.

SUMMARY OF DEVOLUTION DEALS

Some devolution deals share similar elements, but do differ in scope i.e. the length of mayoral terms and specific powers. For instance, powers fall to either the combined authority or elected mayor differently depending on what has been agreed in that particular place.



SUMMARY OF DEVOLUTION DEALS

COMBINED AUTHORITY	SPECIFICS	MAYOR
<p>CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH</p> <p>Cambridge City, Cambridgeshire County, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire, Peterborough City and South Cambridgeshire</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elected mayor has responsibility for multi-year, transport budget, key route network of local authority roads, powers over strategic planning including control of a £100m housing and infrastructure fund. - CA has control of £20m a year Single Investment Fund, ring-fenced funding to meet Cambridge housing needs, 16+ skills provision and devolved 19+ adult skills funding from 2018/19. - More effective joint working with UKTI to boost trade and investment through agreement of a Joint Export Plan. 	<p>James Palmer (Conservative)</p> <p>Term: 2017 – 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Served on Cambridgeshire County Council and as leader of East Cambridgeshire District Council - Businessman in agricultural sector
<p>CONTACT DETAILS: 01353 665555 (Mayor’s Office) cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk</p>		

<p>CORNWALL</p> <p>Cornwall</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cornwall Council has power over franchising bus services by 2018, Intermediate Body status for two European Union structural funds. - Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEPs work with the Government to re-shape further education training and learning provision for adults; integrate local and national business support services. - Cornwall Council, Council of the Isles of Scilly and local health organisations produce a business plan for the integration of health and social care services. - Government works with local partners to jointly develop new apprenticeship opportunities, invite proposals for a low carbon enterprise zone, improve efficiencies in the public estate, invite local partners to create a Cornish Heritage Environment Forum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not applicable - Cornwall has chosen not to elect a mayor
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CONTACT DETAILS: County Hall, Treyew Road, Truro, TR1 3AY | 0300 1234 100 | www.cornwall.gov.uk

SUMMARY OF DEVOLUTION DEALS

COMBINED AUTHORITY	SPECIFICS	MAYOR
<p>GREATER LONDON</p> <p>Barking & Dagenham, Barnet, Bexley, Brent, Bromley, Camden, City of London, Croydon, Ealing, Enfield, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith & Fulham, Haringey, Harrow, Havering, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Islington, Kensington & Chelsea, Kingston, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Newham, Redbridge, Richmond, Southwark, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Wandsworth, Westminster</p>  <p>CONTACT DETAILS: City Hall, More London Riverside, London, SE1 2AA 020 7983 4000 www.london.gov.uk</p>	<p>Technically not a devolution deal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Greater London Authority (GLA) is a unique authority unlike any other in the UK. It consists of an elected mayor (holding executive power) and London Assembly which can amend the Mayor's annual budget, or a Mayoral strategy, on a two-thirds majority. - Principal purposes include: promoting economic development, social development and the improvement of the environment. - GLA has authority over the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority and Transport for London and general power of competence used to promote economic and social development and environmental improvements. - 100 per cent local retention of business rates growth is being piloted from 2017/18. 	<p>Sadiq Khan (Labour)</p> <p>Term: 2016 – 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Former MP - Served as Minister of State for Transport under PM Gordon Brown - Previously Councillor at Wandsworth Borough Council
<p>LIVERPOOL CITY REGION</p> <p>Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool City, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral</p>  <p>CONTACT DETAILS: No 1 Mann Island, Liverpool, L3 1BP www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elected mayor has power over transport budget, bus services, integrated ticketing, and planning powers over strategic planning including a Single Statutory City Region. - Framework, a Mayoral Development Corporation and with Government a Land Commission and a Joint Assets Board for economic assets. - CA has control of £30m a year funding, skills provision, adult skills, employment support and joint working with UKTI. - 100 per cent local retention of business rates growth is being piloted from 2017/18. 	<p>Steve Rotheram (Labour)</p> <p>Term: 2017 – 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Former MP - Former Councillor at Liverpool City Council - Set up his own business in building sector

SUMMARY OF DEVOLUTION DEALS

COMBINED AUTHORITY	SPECIFICS	MAYOR
<p>GREATER MANCHESTER</p> <p>Bolton, Bury, Manchester City, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford City, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elected mayor has power over a devolved and consolidated transport budget, responsibility for franchised bus services, integrated ticketing, strategic planning including a statutory spatial framework, control of £300m Housing Investment Fund, a reformed earn back deal of £30m a year for 30 years, role currently covered by the Police and Crime Commissioner. - CA has responsibility for devolved business support budgets, and alongside Greater Manchester Clinical Commissioning Groups will be invited to develop a business plan for the integration of health and social care. - 100 per cent local retention of business rates growth is being piloted from 2017/18. 	<p>Andy Burnham (Labour)</p> <p>Term: 2017 – 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Former MP - Held various posts in government including Secretary of State for Health - Ran for Labour leadership in 2010 and 2015
<p>CONTACT DETAILS: Churchgate House, 56 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 6EU 0161 778 7000 www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk</p>		
<p>TEES VALLEY</p> <p>Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elected mayor has responsibility for consolidated transport budget, creation of new Mayoral Development Corporations and leadership of a land commission. - CA created Tees Valley Investment Fund, have control of £15m a year funding, leadership of the comprehensive review and redesign of the education, skills and employment support and business support. 	<p>Ben Houchen (Conservative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Term: 2017 – 2021 - Solicitor specialising in commercial litigation and employment law - Previously stood for parliament and European parliament
<p>CONTACT DETAILS: Cavendish House, Teesdale Business Park, Stockton-on-Tees, Tees Valley, TS17 6QY 01642 524400 www.teesvalley-ca.gov.uk</p>		

SUMMARY OF DEVOLUTION DEALS

COMBINED AUTHORITY	SPECIFICS	MAYOR
WEST OF ENGLAND Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City and South Gloucestershire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Elected mayor has power over local transport budget, ability to franchise bus services, responsibility for key route road network and powers over strategic planning, adopt a statutory spatial development plan.- CA controls £30m a year funding allocation over 30 years for the West of England Single Investment Fund to boost growth, responsibility for the 19+ Adult Education Budget from 2018/19, and joint responsibility with the Government to co-design the new National Work and Health Programme.- Government works with CA on trade and investment services.	Tim Bowles (Conservative) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Term: 2017 – 2021- Former Councillor for Winterbourne in South Gloucestershire- Former business development manager
WEST MIDLANDS Birmingham City, City of Wolverhampton, Coventry City, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull and Walsall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Further devolution package under discussion following the 2017 mayoral election- Elected mayor has power over transport budget, bus services, integrated ticketing, key road network and planning powers to drive housing delivery.- CA has control of £36.5m a year funding, skills provision, adult skills, joint responsibility for employment support and integrated working on investment and trade.	Andy Street (Conservative) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Term: 2017 – 2021- Managing director of John Lewis from 2007 to 2016- Former Chair of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP- Former member of PM David Cameron's Business Advisory Group

CONTACT DETAILS: Engine Shed, Station Approach, Temple Meads, Bristol, BS1 6QH | 0117 903 6868 | www.westofengland-ca.org.uk

CONTACT DETAILS: 16 Summer Lane, Birmingham, B19 3SD | 0121 200 2787 | www.wmca.org.uk

LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIPS

RETAIL CHECKLIST

- Put forward senior representative on board in areas where there is a strong presence
- Influence the development of Strategic Economic Plans and how funds are spent by participating in working groups

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF LEPS?

Thirty-eight Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) operate across England which originally began in 2010 following the abolition of Regional Development Agencies. LEPs should be a business-led partnership between local businesses and local authorities with the aim of promoting growth and job creation. However, in some cases there are questions about who leads them, for instance, whether in practice they are instead led by councillors and local authority officials. They are important for a range of reasons including the fact LEPs have been the driving force behind devolution deals.

LEPs can also provide a route for businesses to build stronger links directly with their communities and advance Corporate Social Responsibility, by connecting to the broader public policy agenda through the public sector and other partners who lead these arrangements. LEPs have also acted as the focus for conversations about aligning and simplifying local regulatory frameworks and approaches, where that is relevant to retail – including Primary Authority Schemes.

Activities of LEPs vary widely, and include:

- Assisting and sometimes leading devolution deals
- Developing Strategic Economic Plans to apply for Local Growth funds
- Applying for European funding
- Proposing Enterprise Zones
- Aligning local regulatory frameworks

A £12 billion Local Growth Fund has been committed to funding LEPs from 2015-16 and 2020-21 following the *No Stone Unturned: in pursuit of growth* review led by Lord Michael Heseltine. LEPs bid for funds by developing Strategic Economic Plans outlining their plans for local growth and after allocation the funds are under the individual LEP's direct control.

HOW CAN RETAILERS ADVANCE THEIR PRIORITIES?

Only 7 out of 38 LEPs across England have a retail representative on their board. If retailers are not represented it is unlikely the views of retailers will be given serious consideration when Strategic Economic Plans are being developed in the area.

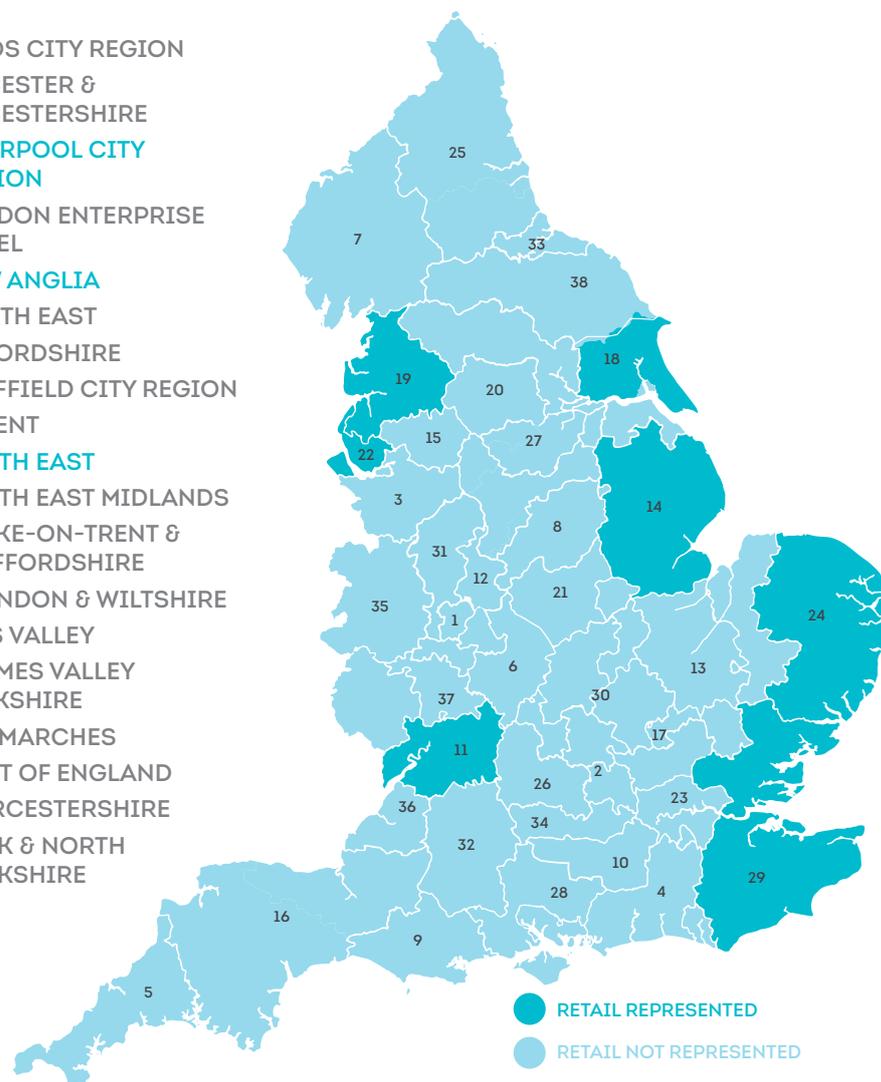
LEPs provide an opportunity for business engagement on commercially important issues; therefore, retailers should welcome the opportunity and become involved. For instance, there have been past proposals by Government that LEPs would be involved in deciding whether a combined authority with an elected mayor is able to implement a business rates supplement to fund major infrastructure projects. However, these plans are currently on hold. If the plans were to resurface the BRC recommends a business ballot similar to that used to approve BID levies.

There is not a standard process to become involved in the work of LEPs, and it will vary from place to place. Businesses with particularly large presences i.e. head office or a major distribution centre within a LEP boundary, may find it easier to become involved. Often an invitation to sit on a LEP board may come via personal invitation of a current board member or chairperson.

However, it is also possible to become involved with the work of LEPs by identifying a particular senior team member to participate in working groups which may ultimately result in an invitation to join the board. A board member could expect to spend approximately one day each month working on LEP business and is considered to be a personal development opportunity.

RETAIL REPRESENTATION

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. BLACK COUNTRY | 20. LEEDS CITY REGION |
| 2. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
THAMES VALLEY | 21. LEICESTER &
LEICESTERSHIRE |
| 3. CHESHIRE &
WARRINGTON | 22. LIVERPOOL CITY
REGION |
| 4. COAST TO CAPITAL | 23. LONDON ENTERPRISE
PANEL |
| 5. CORNWALL & THE ISLES
OF SCILLY | 24. NEW ANGLIA |
| 6. COVENTRY &
WARWICKSHIRE | 25. NORTH EAST |
| 7. CUMBRIA | 26. OXFORDSHIRE |
| 8. DERBY, DERBYSHIRE,
NOTTINGHAM
& NOTTINGHAMSHIRE | 27. SHEFFIELD CITY REGION |
| 9. DORSET | 28. SOLENT |
| 10. ENTERPRISE M3 | 29. SOUTH EAST |
| 11. GFIRST | 30. SOUTH EAST MIDLANDS |
| 12. GREATER BIRMINGHAM
& SOLIHULL | 31. STOKE-ON-TRENT &
STAFFORDSHIRE |
| 13. GREATER CAMBRIDGE &
PETERBOROUGH | 32. SWINDON & WILTSHIRE |
| 14. GREATER
LINCOLNSHIRE | 33. TEES VALLEY |
| 15. GREATER MANCHESTER | 34. THAMES VALLEY
BERKSHIRE |
| 16. HEART OF THE SOUTH
WEST | 35. THE MARCHES |
| 17. HERTFORDSHIRE | 36. WEST OF ENGLAND |
| 18. HUMBER | 37. WORCESTERSHIRE |
| 19. LANCASHIRE | 38. YORK & NORTH
YORKSHIRE |



BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

RETAIL CHECKLIST

- Inform store managers of benefits of engagement, encourage and incentivise participation
- Regularly attend meetings, inform business plans and participate in activities
- Actively vote in new BID ballots and renewal

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF BIDS?

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are business-led and business-funded partnerships formed to improve a defined commercial area. The majority of BIDs exist in town centres, but they are also found in industrial, commercial and mixed-use areas.

UK retailers are responsible for approximately 40 per cent of BID levy income meaning retailers contribute more than £30 million to BIDs across the UK each year. The aims of BIDs are based on their individual business plans approved by levy payers. Objectives often include measures to improve safety and security, improve accessibility and increase footfall, but are dependent upon the particular business needs in an area.

A BID can only be formed following consultation and a ballot in which businesses vote on a BID Proposal or Business Plan for the area. Each potential levy payer within a proposed BID boundary has a vote to either support or oppose a proposed BID or one considered for renewal typically every five years. Voting involves a double lock ensuring the views of small and large businesses are appropriately considered. For instance, for a BID to be enacted a ballot requires the support of half of those hereditaments which vote, and half of the total rateable value within the proposed boundary. However, there is not a minimum turnout required meaning it is important that levy payers take advantage of their right to vote.

Retailers and other levy payers are funding BID activities therefore they should help shape the BIDs' objectives. When businesses fail to engage effectively with BIDs they will potentially be faced with increased cost of operating with no commensurate strengthening of trading performance.

RETAIL BID PRIORITIES



Source: BRC April 2017 Member Survey

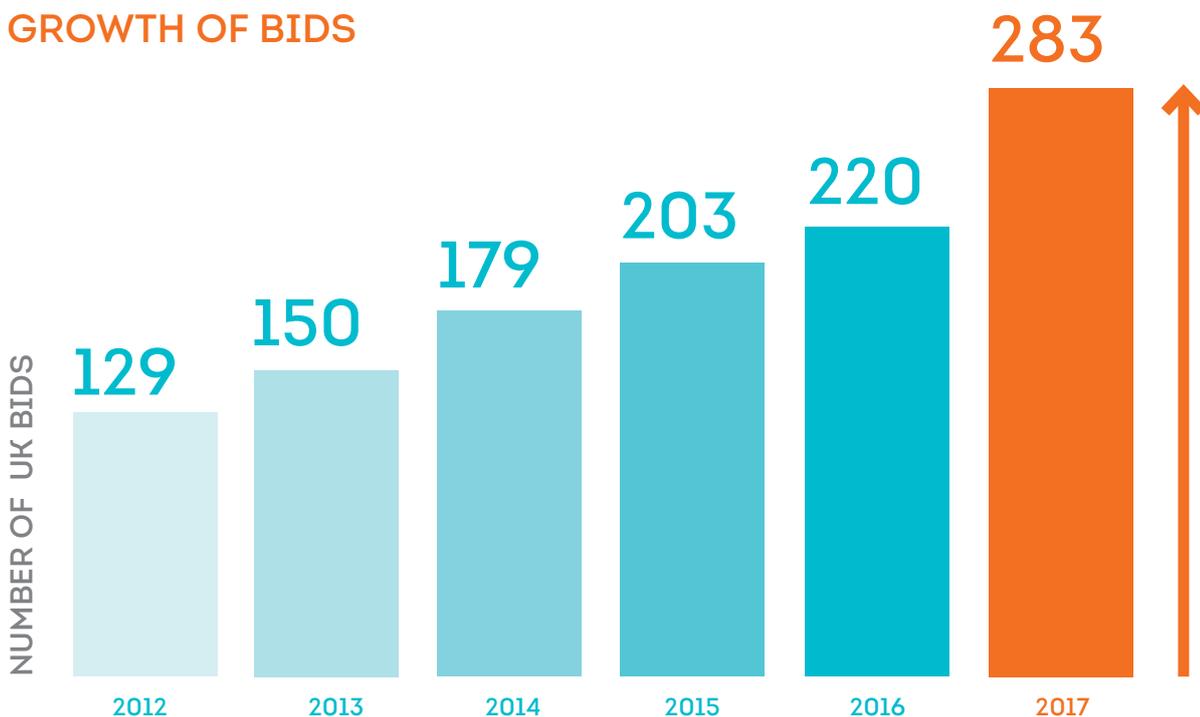
HOW CAN RETAILERS ADVANCE THEIR PRIORITIES?

BIDs should actively engage with local managers and head offices, however, their first port of call may be local store managers which may or may not be the best contact depending on the level of engagement required. Retailers should ensure store personnel understand the benefits and are given the ability to properly engage. BIDs should also ensure relevant head office employees are kept up-to-date with BID priorities, but this will vary from company so there is some responsibility for the retailer to make clear to local BIDs what they expect in terms of communication and engagement.

Most BIDs have websites which include phone numbers and email addresses. As levy payers, retailers are entitled to attend meetings and meet with BID teams. There may also be opportunities to sit on BID boards where the vast majority of members are business representatives.

Engagement will vary, but as retailers work to derive more value from their investment in BIDs it will become increasingly important colleagues at the local level and head office are actively engaged. Engaged store managers may spend one to two hours each month engaging with their local BID team, whereas, head offices may engage less regularly until the BID is seeking renewal.

GROWTH OF BIDS



REGIONAL ENGINES

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF REGIONAL ENGINES?

To date two regional engines, the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine, to promote economic growth have been adopted and there is continued discussion as to whether the models can be replicated elsewhere. Both the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine focus on improving connectivity and aim to exploit and build upon investments such as High Speed 2. Central government has helped establish investment packages for both regional engines.

The Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund launched in February 2017 and is worth more than £400 million used to scale up businesses supporting its vision. The Midlands Engine Investment Fund was launched in August 2017 and combines £250 million to invest directly to smaller businesses. Both areas' investment funds receive support from the Government, European Regional Development Fund, British Business Bank and European Investment Bank and work in coordination with 10 area LEPs both in the North and Midlands.

In November 2016, the Northern Powerhouse Strategy was published outlining its vision to improve upon connectivity, skills, enterprise, innovation, trade, investment and engagement. The powerhouse includes the North East, Sheffield City Region, Liverpool City Region, Leeds City Region, Greater Manchester and Humber building on the particular strengths of each area to help attract outside investment. The hope is to replicate investment that has taken place elsewhere such as the Randstad in the Netherlands and the Rhine-Ruhr in Germany.

In March 2017, the Midlands Engine Strategy was published to improve connectivity, strengthen skills, support enterprise and innovation, promote trade and investment and enhance quality of life. The Midlands Engine is focused on advanced manufacturing and stretches from Wales to the North Sea and the northern Home Counties to the Peak District. In addition to better collaboration amongst LEPs and universities the Midlands Engine has produced a regional branding proposition to attract international investment.

HOW CAN RETAILERS ADVANCE THEIR PRIORITIES?

Attracting investment to help achieve economic growth in these at-large regions could benefit the retail industry. However, engagement at the combined authority and LEP levels may be a more beneficial use of retailers' time and resources. Both areas' visions are led by regional steering groups largely made up of LEPs and regional leaders such as elected metro mayors.

CONCLUSION

Retail engagement with the communities they serve will remain an important topic as we strive to make a success of English devolution. As Government continues to consider devolving further powers the retail industry will build upon its already strong local engagement and we hope this guide assists with these efforts to promote local growth.

We as an industry are also committed to work with Government to ensure their agenda is fit for purpose as devolution offers opportunities for local government and businesses to encourage investment. To assist taking advantage of opportunities the BRC has proposed a framework for devolution incorporating the following areas to help ensure local investment.

DEVOLUTION FRAMEWORK

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

We propose each combined authority put forward a Business Engagement Strategy and encourage the Government to ensure local governments have robust plans for business engagement outlining the steps they plan to undertake.

DEVOLUTION ROADMAP

To reduce uncertainty, we encourage Government to publish a Devolution Roadmap outlining its long-term objectives, timescale for reforms and plan for engagement with all stakeholders.

POWERS AT OPTIMAL LEVEL

We encourage the Government to consider how decision making can be made at the most appropriate level of government. Some powers should be devolved, some should be centralised and others should be jointly shared between neighbouring authorities.

FISCAL MECHANISMS

Business rates should not be the only fiscal tool available to local government as they transition away from central government grants. Central government should consider giving local government further powers necessary to prevent business rates from being one of the few methods of generating revenue.

CAPABILITY IN PLACE

Readiness should be carefully considered before devolving powers. Before powers are devolved it should be established whether authorities are prepared to take on additional responsibilities, able to implement safeguards and ensure business engagement.

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Retail is an exciting, diverse and dynamic industry undergoing transformational change. The BRC is at the forefront – enhancing, assisting, informing, and shaping. Our broad range of stakeholders demonstrates how retailing touches almost every aspect of our culture.

The BRC leads the industry and works with our members to tell the story of retail, shape debates and influence issues and opportunities which will help make that positive difference. We care about the careers of people who work in our industry, the communities retail touches and competitiveness as a fundamental principle of the industry’s success – our 3 Cs.

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