



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE NORTH WEST

Corporate Plan

2008-11



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Foreword



**Rt Hon Hazel
Blears MP**

Secretary of State
for Communities
and Local
Government

Government Offices play a crucial part in building a stronger, more prosperous future for every part of the country. They are the bridge between Whitehall and local authorities, connecting national policy to people and the places they live in. In this past year, a pivotal period for local devolution, they have shown what a difference they can make.

With the long-anticipated shift of power towards local communities turning from rhetoric into reality, Government Offices have played a key role in negotiating new Local Area Agreements, setting a compelling vision for the future for each part of the country. They have worked closely with new Regional Ministers, standing up for their region's interests. And in the face of unforeseen challenges, from attempted terrorist attacks, to animal epidemics, to floods, they have risen to the occasion time and again.

In the North West, Government Office is working across departmental boundaries to tackle the big issues facing the region. This brings expertise from different fields to bear on deep-seated problems like health inequalities and worklessness. Teams also take this cross-cutting approach to important areas of work like climate change and community cohesion.

Building on these strong foundations, this Corporate Plan spells out the GO Network's ambitions for the three years ahead.



Liz Meek

Regional Director
Government Office
for the North West

I'm delighted to have been appointed Regional Director at the Government Office for the North West and to be given this opportunity briefly to outline to you our plans for the next three years.

I worked in the North West at an earlier stage of my career on urban development and on Manchester's Olympic bid, and lived in Rochdale for a couple of years as a child. I am very pleased to be back and looking forward to getting to know the region and the people who work so hard to make it a good place to live.

We have identified four major themes for action in 2008/09. These span the broad range of our work. We want to tackle inequalities, to create stronger communities, to foster sustainable economic growth and to build a secure and sustainable environment.

Our work on these themes will be described in a series of detailed activity plans which will be published on our website www.gonw.gov.uk over the next few months.

We have also identified four priority issues which cut right across the work of this office and which have a profound effect on the way the region develops in the future. These are worklessness, community cohesion, health inequalities and climate change.

I'd like to thank those of you who've worked closely with GONW and very much look forward to tackling the challenges ahead together.

Regional facts and figures

The North West has a population of 6.9 million and is the largest region outside London and the South East. It has a Gross Value Added (GVA) of over £100bn, which means its economy is larger than that of a number of European countries. Its sheer scale and diversity are defining characteristics.

The contrasts are great. The vibrant cities of Manchester and Liverpool are key drivers of growth but alongside their cosmopolitan café culture, knowledge-based industries and affluent suburbs sit concentrations of severe disadvantage.

Levels of deprivation are also high in the older industrialised towns of East Lancashire and Barrow-in-Furness and in some coastal resorts, notably Blackpool.

Over a third of North West local authorities feature in the fifty worst performing nationally, according to the latest Index of Multiple Deprivation. Liverpool, Knowsley and Manchester are in the bottom five.

Almost 90 per cent of the region's population lives in urban areas, but four-fifths of its land area is rural and agricultural change poses real challenges, especially for upland communities. 29 per cent of the North West is in a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and over 200,000 hectares is designated for its nature conservation importance.

Real improvements have been made in recent years in economic performance, health, education and crime, but the North West still underperforms national averages and inequalities persist between different parts of the region.

Levels of worklessness (people of working age not working) are high and concentrated in a few local authorities.



9.5 per cent of the working age population is on incapacity benefits – the second highest rate for all English regions. Liverpool alone has about 38,000 people on these benefits.

The North West lags behind other English regions in terms of life expectancy. There is up to six years difference between the worst performing places (Liverpool and Manchester) and the best (South Lakeland).

Greater Manchester South, Halton / Warrington and Cheshire have experienced economic growth above the English average, but Cumbria has the slowest rate of all UK sub-regions.

Overall, the North West is the third slowest growing region. We are failing to close the gap with the South East, but increasingly face transport issues and problems of housing affordability more typically seen there.

Our population is ageing and the region is becoming more culturally and ethnically diverse. International in-migration offers great opportunities but also brings challenges for public service delivery and community cohesion.

1 Blackpool Tower

The North West



District Boundary

Single Tier Authorities **Blackpool**

Sub-regions

Cumbria

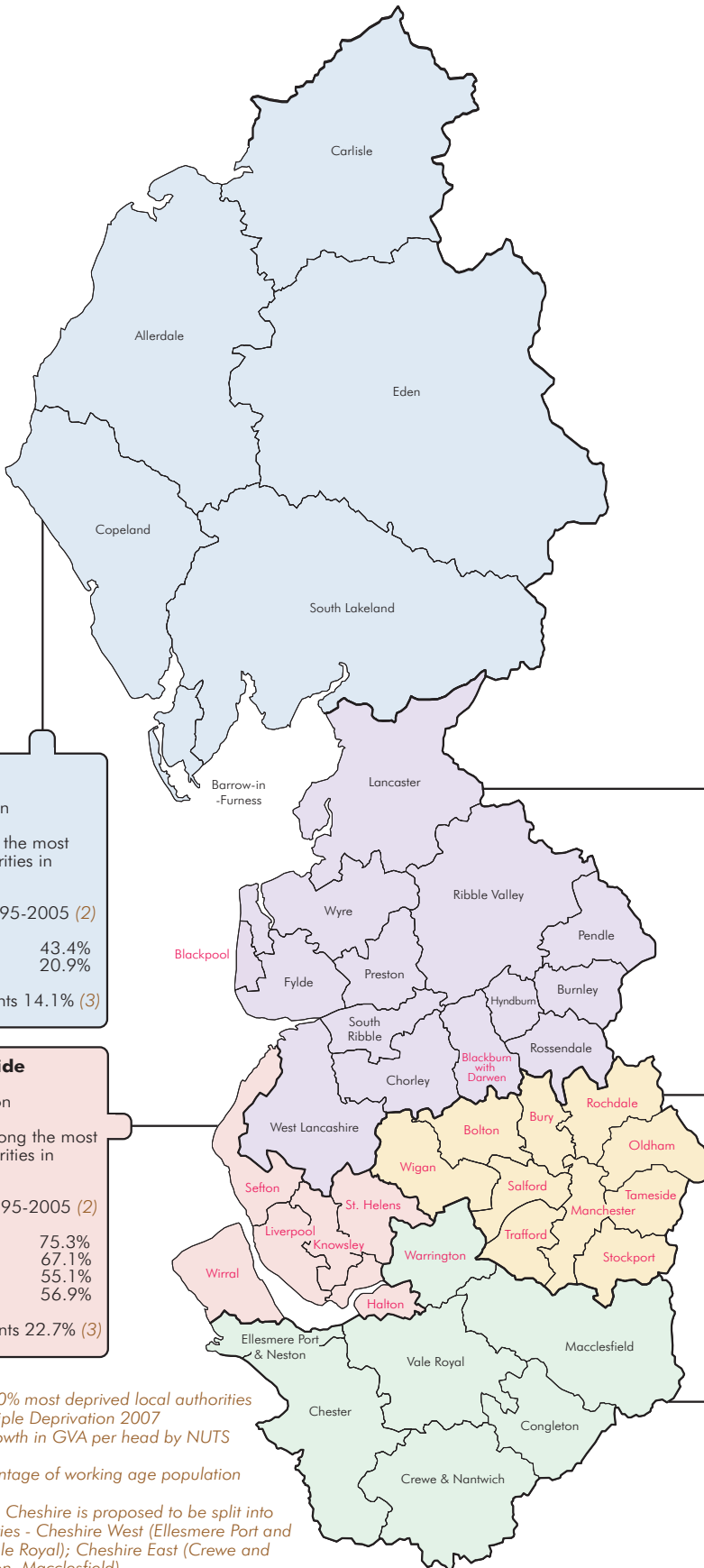
Lancashire

Greater Merseyside

Greater Manchester

Cheshire

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Cumbria
Population 0.5 million
1 authority is among the most deprived local authorities in England (1)
Economic growth 1995-2005 (2)

- East Cumbria 43.4%
- West Cumbria 20.9%

Total benefits claimants 14.1% (3)

Lancashire
Population 1.4 million
6 authorities are among the most deprived local authorities in England (1)
Economic growth 1995-2005 (2)

- Lancashire County 51.8%
- Blackpool 42.8%
- Blackburn with Darwen 33.5%

Total benefits claimants 16% (3)

Greater Merseyside
Population 1.5 million
5 authorities are among the most deprived local authorities in England (1)
Economic growth 1995-2005 (2)

- Liverpool 75.3%
- East Merseyside 67.1%
- Sefton 55.1%
- Wirral 56.9%

Total benefits claimants 22.7% (3)

Greater Manchester
Population 2.6 million
7 authorities are among the most deprived local authorities in England (1)
Economic growth 1995-2005 (2)

- Gtr Manchester North 36.7%
- Gtr Manchester South 80.7%

Total benefits claimants 18.1% (3)

Cheshire (4)
Population 0.9 million
No authorities are among the most deprived local authorities in England (1)
Economic growth 1995-2005 (2)

- Cheshire County 49.7%
- Halton & Warrington 70%

Total benefits claimants 11.6% (3)

(1) Defined as in the 20% most deprived local authorities in the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007
(2) As measured by growth in GVA per head by NUTS 3 area
(3) Measured as percentage of working age population resident in the area
(4) As from April 2009, Cheshire is proposed to be split into two Unitary Authorities - Cheshire West (Ellesmere Port and Neston, Chester, Vale Royal); Cheshire East (Crewe and Nantwich, Congleton, Macclesfield)



The way we work

The GO Network - partnering with Whitehall to:

- strengthen national policies
- integrate regional strategies
- drive local delivery

Government Offices:

- are Whitehall in the regions – each supporting a Regional Minister
- work at the crossroads of policy and delivery
- make a reality of decentralised and devolved government
- join up and align Departmental programmes to ensure coherence in delivery
- feed back from the front line – identifying the key local issues and local players
- identify and resolve potential barriers to delivery
- oversee contingency planning and resilience to enable government to respond to large-scale, wide-impact emergencies

Government Offices (GOs) represent central government in nine regions across England. Since its creation in 1994, the Network has become the primary means by which a wide range of Government policies are coordinated in the English regions. GOs use their influence to effectively align the delivery of national, regional and local priorities.

GOs are new government – ambitious, flexible and responsive across Whitehall and the regions. We connect policy to people and the places they live. We exist because what works in one part of the country may need to be different in another. As Whitehall's representatives in the North West, GONW will:

- drive the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and Multi Area Agreement (MAA) processes, challenging poor performance, sharing best practice, building the capacity of institutions and partnerships to deliver, and intervening where necessary to turn things round
- influence regional and sub-regional strategies, notably the new Single Regional Strategy, to develop appropriate responses to the key issues facing the North West, backed up by clear implementation proposals
- help shape national policy in ways that reflect our experience on the ground; GONW's Regional Director leads on behalf of all nine Government Offices on local government policy and on relations with the Department for Work and Pensions and the Cabinet Office, on worklessness and social exclusion
- support the Regional Minister in her role representing central government in the North West and acting as an ambassador for the region in Whitehall

- implement the Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR), developing and consulting on proposals to devolve more policy and funding decisions to the region; GONW leads for the GO Network on proposals for the Single Regional Strategy, a key element of SNR.

The 2006 Treasury Review of GOs envisaged a declining role for us in directly managing programmes. This work is diminishing but, in winding down our involvement, we must safeguard the investments made and the results achieved. We will proactively manage all the direct European-funded contracts we hold, in order to close down the programmes in line with regulations. We will ensure that the Regional Director's role, including chairing the region's European Programme Committee, is clear and that all partners understand where responsibility for programme management lies.

A focus on localities or 'place'

GONW works across the entire Whitehall agenda. We are able to join up departmental policies and programmes so they make sense and add most value in a local area. Whitehall values our local knowledge and our ability to tailor their programmes to fit local circumstances.

Our Partnership Director model of engaging with localities has proved valuable as a primary means of managing relationships with key partners and organisations – notably local authority Chief Executives and sub-regional partnerships.

It is now supported by a set of place-based teams (based on the geography of sub-regions and upper tier local authorities) that come together from across GONW to pool their experience on specific policy areas.



Priorities for our region

Our vision is for an economically prosperous, socially inclusive region with a high quality environment. To achieve this we will focus on four broad themes which encompass the policy agendas of our 11 Whitehall sponsor Departments and reflect clusters of Public Service Agreements. They are:

- **tackling inequalities**
- **stronger communities**
- **sustainable economic growth**
- **a secure and sustainable environment**

We are preparing detailed activity plans for around 20 key delivery areas under these themes. We will engage on the whole range of policy issues that underpin them – from crime and health, to housing and waste, transport and education. We will particularly emphasise four cross-cutting topics of special significance for the North West - worklessness, community cohesion, health inequalities and climate change.

1 Staff from GONW at a recent conference in Merseyside

Tackling inequalities



Our objectives are to:

- **reduce worklessness**
- **address social exclusion and disadvantage**
- **reduce health inequalities and improve well-being**

There are many links between these objectives. Poverty and low wages are closely related to poor health. Increasing skills, improving employability and getting people into work all help tackle entrenched and inter-generational patterns of disadvantage and ill-health. We will:

- use the mechanisms of Local Area Agreements and Multi Area Agreements to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policy interventions
- ensure that tackling inequalities is a core element of the Single Regional Strategy; we will also champion the development of an integrated and effective Regional Skills Strategy and Action Plan
- influence the use made of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund and its alignment with other economic regeneration programmes

- challenge and support the development and delivery of City Employment Strategies. The Regional Minister has agreed to adopt the one for Merseyside
- raise awareness of health inequality issues through a regional social marketing programme
- support the development of regional social care capacity and presence to maximise impact on tackling health inequalities amongst the most vulnerable groups, and reduce disparities in access to support and care
- ensure the needs of particularly excluded groups and individuals are not neglected, and their prospects for work and accommodation are maximised.

- 1 Support for people getting back into work
- 2 Fitness class at Greenbank Sports Academy, Liverpool

Stronger communities



Our objectives are to:

- **make communities safer and reduce harm from drugs and alcohol**
- **build more cohesive, empowered and active communities**
- **improve outcomes for children and learners**

We will use multi-agency action to tackle the wider socio-economic determinants such as employment, education, housing, transport and the environment. We will:

- address these inter-relationships through our influence on the Single Regional Strategy and our work on LAAs and MAAs
- challenge performance where cohesion and safety outcomes are not improving
- interpret national policy in the local context, identify the drivers of change and keep them under review, feeding back the lessons from seeing policy in action to colleagues in Whitehall
- implement the priorities set out in the Children's Plan, including strengthening support for all families during the formative early years of a child's life

- better understand migration issues as they affect the region and use this understanding to influence national and regional policy and support local authorities.

1 Delegates at a recent Hate Crime conference in Manchester

Sustainable growth



Our objectives are to:

- **improve economic performance and narrow the gap with other regions**
- **improve connectivity and accessibility through more reliable and efficient transport**
- **increase housing supply and affordability**

We will focus our efforts to help meet the Northwest Development Agency's growth objective of 1.8 per cent to 2.3 per cent per annum; to secure transport investment that facilitates that growth; and to deliver the region's contribution to the *Housing Green Paper*. We will:

- ensure a Single Regional Strategy is developed which accelerates sustainable economic growth, and successfully integrates economic, transport, housing, health and environmental considerations
- deliver a partial review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), focused on housing, waste and energy, to underpin the Single Regional Strategy
- develop an evaluation strategy which helps regional and local partners to identify the best interventions to deliver sustainable growth
- ensure that Regional Funding Allocations (both the refresh of Round 1 and Round 2) support the region's priorities for growth and work with the Department for Transport to develop high quality transport solutions
- improve the capacity of strategic and delivery bodies by securing improved regional and sub-regional leadership and governance arrangements (including transport)
- develop high quality Housing Growth Point proposals which deliver 20 per cent increases over Regional Spatial Strategy numbers without adversely impacting on the regeneration of Housing Market Renewal Areas
- ensure that LAAs and MAAs address housing supply and improve the capacity of local authorities to deliver balanced housing markets, including affordable homes
- develop Local Transport Plan progress reports with Local Transport Authorities
- support and challenge the development of Local Development Frameworks, testing them against national policy and local objectives.

- 1 Shoppers and Metrolink in central Manchester
- 2 Housing development in Stockport

Secure, sustainable environment



Our objectives are to:

- **combat climate change**
- **improve environmental quality and sustainability**
- **develop regional resilience capacity**

Climate change, natural hazards and malicious threats are a challenge to the well-being of the region. We want to ensure an appropriate response, promote sustainability and improve the quality of the region's environment. We will:

- lead the debate on climate change and drive delivery of the North West Climate Change Action Plan, ensuring that mitigation and adaptation are addressed in all key regional and local strategies
- ensure a strategic and co-ordinated approach to understanding the region's environmental limits and opportunities, to underpin the Single Regional Strategy
- support and challenge the poorest performing local authorities on waste recycling, promote joint working between the region's Waste Disposal Authorities and support the provision of new waste infrastructure
- champion sustainability issues in the region through the North West Sustainable Development Group and make GONW an exemplar organisation in the way we manage our estate and go about our work
- support the North West Rural Affairs Forum to act as the region's rural voice, and the North West Rural Strategic Group to deliver the priorities in the North West Rural Delivery Framework
- advise and support the North West champion for Sustainable Farming & Food, his Regional Influencing Group, and the Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative in the region
- chair the Regional Resilience Forum and ensure that the capabilities and plans are in place to deliver an effective response to, and recovery from, emergencies
- ensure that LAAs and MAAs address the key environmental challenges and opportunities for local areas.

1 The Lake District, Cumbria



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



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