

UK2070
COMMISSION

UK 2070 – An Inquiry into Regional Inequalities
Towards a Framework for Action

Make No Little Plans

**ACTING AT SCALE FOR
A FAIRER AND STRONGER FUTURE**

**UK2070
Declaration of Intent**

FEBRUARY 2020

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Message from the Chair



UK 2070 Commission is an independent inquiry into the deep-rooted spatial inequalities within the United Kingdom. There is no longer any real debate about the scale of these inequalities. Whether in terms of health, housing or productivity, it is now accepted that the UK is one of the most regionally imbalanced economies in the industrialised world.

Inequality blights the prospects of future generations of the UK. Unless there are fundamental changes these disparities will grow. This means that the economic potential of large parts of the UK is not being realised, creating an imbalance of wealth and opportunity. It also leads to enormous housing, transport and environmental pressures on London and the Wider South East. As a result, nobody is winning.

Inequality has created social division. In many parts of the UK people feel they have been left behind by the growth in wealth and opportunity elsewhere. This is reflected in the last three years' debate over our future in Europe. We face a decade of disruption ahead – leaving the European Union, tackling climate change, the fourth industrial revolution – which threaten to increase these divisions.

Our report therefore avoids the divisive rhetoric that is sometimes used of North-v-South, Towns-v-Cities, or Urban-v-Rural. To succeed, we need to think about North *and* South, Towns *and* Cities, and Urban *and* Rural. The issues of economic underperformance and wellbeing affect all parts of the UK including coastal towns in the south east of England.

Past attempts to remedy the fundamental spatial imbalances in the UK have failed. They have been too little, too late, too fragmented and too short-lived. Radical change is required. We need to comprehensively increase and sustain the scale and breadth of action over the next twenty years through a coordinated plan.

The UK 2070 Commission therefore sets out a compelling case for a new Economic Programme and a Connectivity Revolution. It calls for a devolution of powers and resources from central government and to local communities. This agenda for action needs to be brought together in long-term National Spatial Plans to provide confidence for investment and to help the UK deliver on its international commitment to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

The UK 2070 Commission seeks to transform rhetoric into action through a forward-looking agenda to shape the future of the UK over the next 50 years. The principles are set out in a *Shared Declaration of Intent* for building a fairer, stronger and more sustainable future for all in the UK. We want Government, local leaders and all parties to sign up to this *Declaration* and to start now with urgency to implement the programme of action.

Lord Kerslake, Chair, UK2070 Commission

UK2070 Declaration of Intent

Building a Fairer and Stronger Society

The UK2070 Commission calls upon Government, local leaders and all parties to sign up to this Declaration and start now with urgency to implement the programme of action for creating a fairer, stronger and more sustainable future for the whole of the UK.

The Common Challenge

Eliminating the UK's unacceptable, deep-rooted and long-standing inequalities in standards of living and wellbeing must become the shared common commitment of all parties, national and local, public and private. This is essential to delivering economic security, access to essential services, affordable housing and sustainable environments.

The concentrations of inequality in particular communities, towns and regions exacerbates social and economic inequality, increases the burden on public support and generates political discontent and detachment.

The constraints on regional economic performance are created by a vicious circle of inadequate infrastructure, restricted access to resources and a lack of institutions to take strategic decisions locally.

Without fundamental changes these inequalities will intensify, and be exacerbated by climate change. If this happens there will be an increasingly divided society and a growing burden on the state.

Our Common Purpose

We must create a virtuous circle for change, raising the levels of education, skills and social mobility, and the prospects and aspirations of the next generation, especially in smaller towns and communities in

the older industrial heartlands of the UK and remoter rural areas.

Eliminating regional inequalities will benefit all communities: those blighted by poverty, poor health and lower life expectancy, as much as those distressed by unaffordable housing and over-stretched infrastructure and services.

The need and opportunities for change are made acute by the transition to a zero-carbon economy, the technological revolution and the consequences of the withdrawal from the EU.

Common Commitment to Scaling up Action

A commitment to eliminating inequalities between the nations and regions of the UK should be written into the terms of reference of all governments' departmental and institutional policies, programmes and assessments.

New devolved, decentralised and inclusive administrative structures, powers and resources are required, which are sensitive to national and regional differences and local circumstances, and which will create the institutional capacity to bring about change.

Reformed fiscal institutions and tools, underpinned by a large-scale UK investment fund, are needed to produce effective partnerships and concerted action across all

departments, sectors and levels of government.

The opportunities created by the 'Industrial Revolution 4.0' and the transition to a zero-carbon economy need to be harnessed to create a more balanced and equitable economy across the UK including a rebalancing in the distribution of our national research effort.

There must be a revolution in transport connectivity between and within towns and cities, and which reaches out beyond to marginalised and isolated communities

This far-reaching agenda for change needs to be held together and sustained through long-term spatial frameworks for investment, infrastructure and development for all our nations and regions,.

It must be based on a clear vision for eliminating inequalities and identifying opportunities, whilst building resilience, democratic empowerment, protecting and enhancing our heritage and environment and, most importantly, providing a stable and coherent long term framework for investment in national infrastructure and research.



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